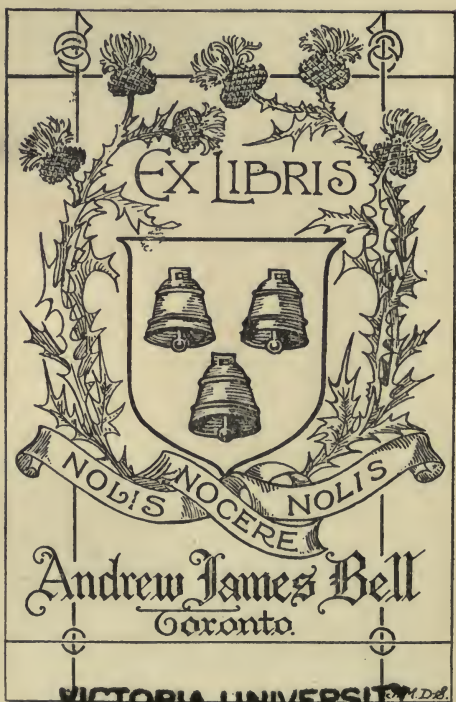


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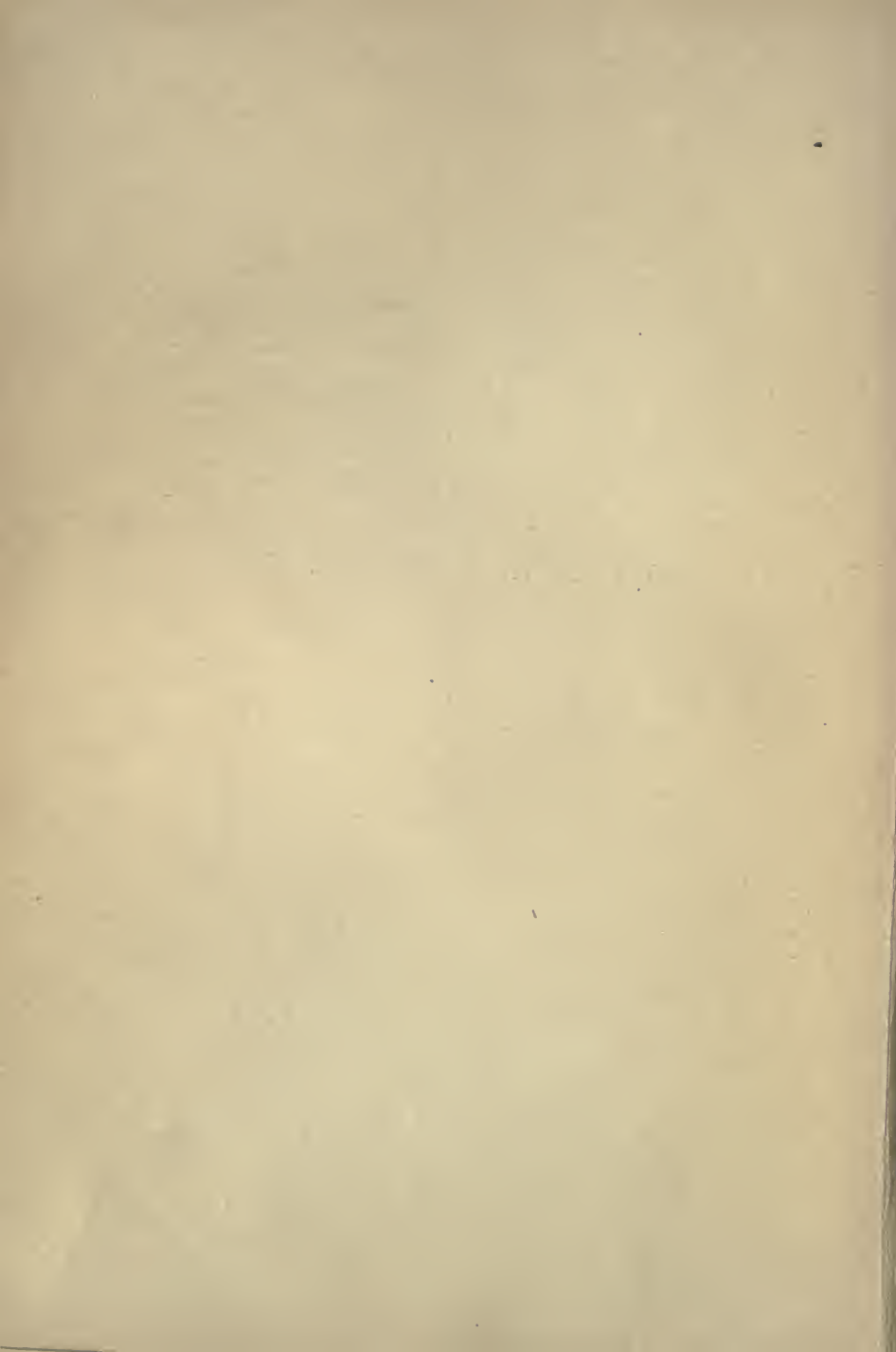
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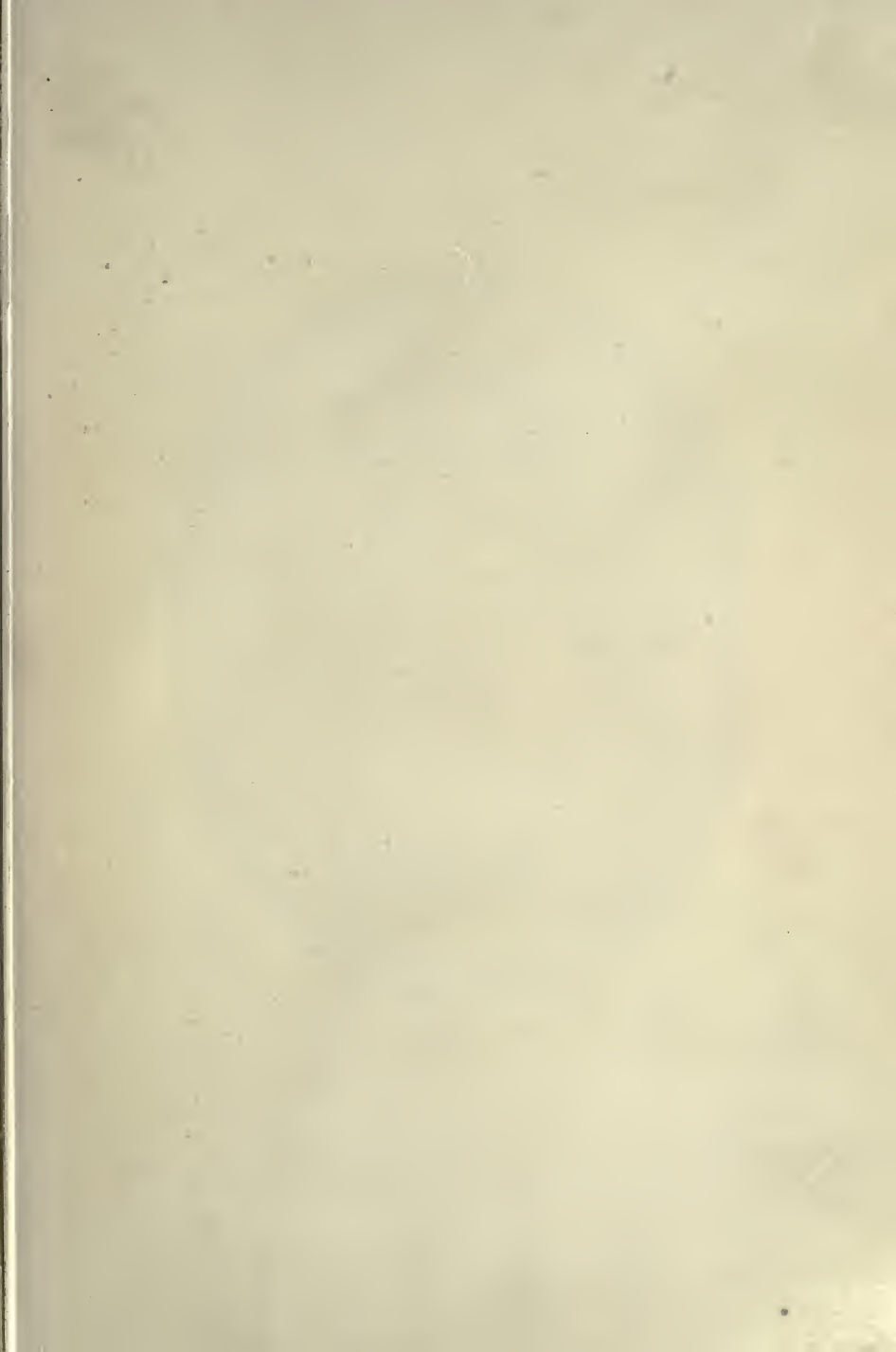
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THE
STORY OF JANE AUSTEN'S LIFE







THE STORY
OF
JANE AUSTEN'S LIFE

BY
OSCAR FAY ADAMS

AUTHOR OF "THE PRESUMPTION OF SEX," "CHAPTERS FROM
JANE AUSTEN," "POST-LAUREATE IDYLS,"
ETC.

New Edition, Illustrated

BOSTON
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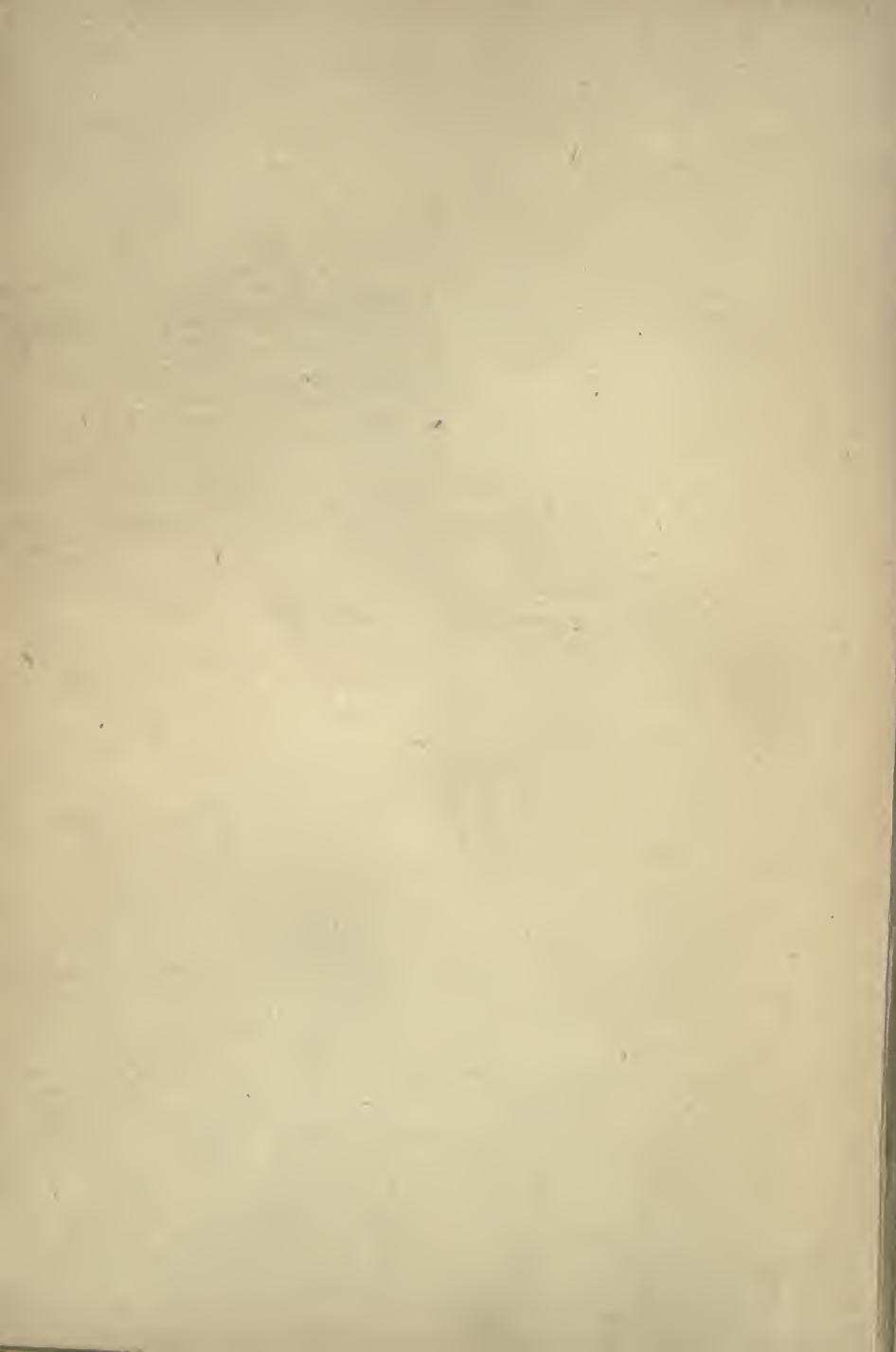
The Story of Jane Austen's Life



To his Friend,

EBEN HOWARD GAY,

The author affectionately dedicates these pages.



P R E F A C E .

THE present volume, appearing so soon after the lives of Miss AUSTEN by Mrs. Malden and Prof. Goldwin Smith, would have little excuse for existence if constructed on precisely the same lines as its predecessors. But Jane Austen the novelist is too well known to the literary world to need much more said concerning her; while Jane Austen the woman is, I am compelled to believe, still a stranger to most of those who read her books. To place her before the world as the winsome, delightful woman that she really was, and thus to dispel the unattractive, not to say forbidding, mental picture that so many have formed of her is the purpose of the chapters that follow. With what success the task here attempted has been achieved is for readers to determine.

The summer of 1889 was spent by the writer in visiting all the localities once familiar to Jane

Austen; and the descriptions of Bath, Steventon, Chawton, and other places can therefore be said to have the merit of accuracy at least. It was originally designed to insert a number of views of localities mentioned; but the difficulty of satisfactorily reproducing these reluctantly obliged the author to forego this intention. The work was begun and partly completed at Winchester, almost in the shadow of its great cathedral; and the opening chapters were read and approved by one of Jane Austen's grandnephews, Reverend Edward Cracroft Lefroy, now, alas! as these lines are written, just dead in the fulness of his powers as a poet, after a long illness.

The writer has received much valued assistance from the Austen kindred and from others interested in his work, and takes occasion here to express his obligations in this respect to Lord Brabourne; Augustus Austen-Leigh, Provost of King's Collegè, Cambridge University; Montagu G. Knight, Esq. of Chawton House, Alton, Hants; and Reverend J. Morland Rice, of Bramber Rectory, Steyning, Sussex,—all grandnephews of Jane Austen. Also to the Very Reverend G. W. Kitchin, Dean of Winchester; Thomas W. Shore, Esq., of Southampton, Hants; R. E. Peach, Esq., of Bath; Mrs. Harris, of Steventon Manor, Whit-

church, Hants ; and Miss Charlotte M. Yonge, of Otterbourne, Hants.

In May of the present year, a number of these chapters were read by the author to the late Hon. James Russell Lowell, at the latter's request, in the study at Elmwood ; and more than one friendly criticism then received has been heeded in the final revision. Mr. Lowell took a warm interest in the work ; and the author had hoped to have the happiness on one of these autumn days of placing the published book before him. But this was not to be ; for just as the first pages were going to press, the summons came, and under the trees of Elmwood their owner passed for the last time.

OSCAR FAY ADAMS.

FELTON HALL,
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS,
Oct. 12, 1891.

NOTE TO SECOND EDITION.

IN this edition the author has followed out his original intention of inserting illustrations of scenes more or less closely connected with the life of Miss Austen; and it is hoped that the volume will possess an added interest thereby. Several of the illustrations are taken from photographs made expressly for the work in the summer of 1889, and the letter of Miss Austen's, of which a fac-simile is presented, was given to the author for that purpose by the late Lord Brabourne. The portrait of Rev. Edward Austen Leigh, her nephew and first biographer, is from a photograph given by his son, A. Austen Leigh, M.A., the Provost of King's College, Cambridge.

THE HERMITAGE,
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS,
November 25, 1896.

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Aug 1796

Lord Street Tuesday morning

My dear Cassandra,

How soon our course in this land of
Dissipation & vice, and I begin already to find my
Revels corrupted — we reached Staines yesterday
I don't know when, without suffering so much from
the heat as I had hoped to do. We set off again
this morning at seven o'clock, & had a very
pleasant Drive, as the morning was cloudy
& perfectly cool — I leave all the way in the
Chair from ~~Stretton~~ Bridges. —

Edward & ~~Henry~~ ^{Frank} are both gone out to seek
their fortunes; the latter is to return soon &
help us out our. The former we shall
see us again. We are to be at Astley's
to night, which I am glad of. Edward has
heard from Henry this morning. He has
not been at the Races, at all, unless his
driving Miss Percemore to Twickenham one day
can be so called. We shall find him there
on Thursday.

I hope you are all alive after our unlamented
parting yesterday, and that you pursued your
intended vacation with success. —

God Bless You — I cannot leave off for
we are going out. Yrs very affec^{tionately}

J. Austen

Every Body's Love.

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THE STORY
OF
JANE AUSTEN'S LIFE.



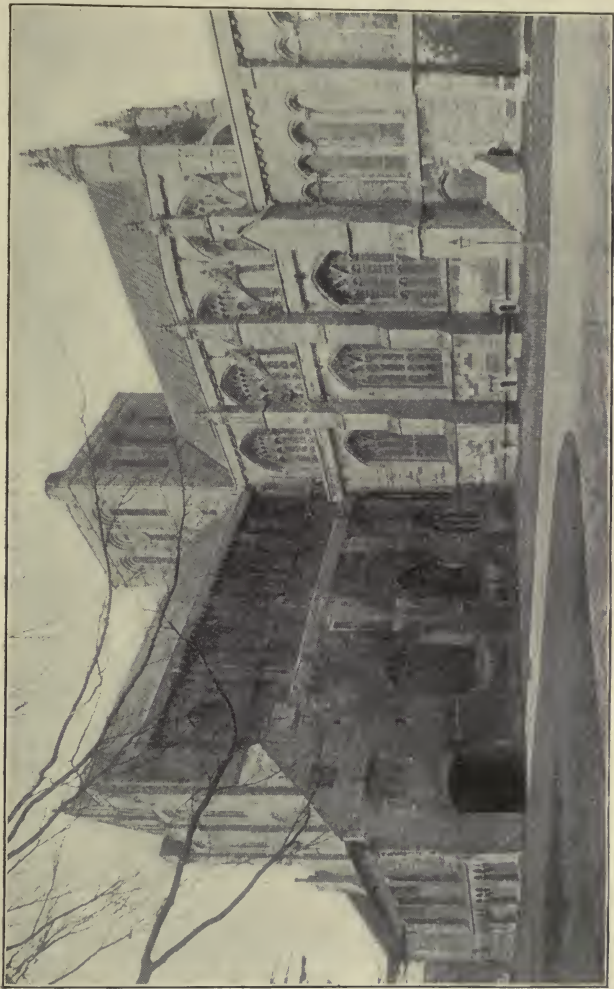
I.

PRELUDE.

IT is late afternoon in Winchester. The shadows are gathering in the gloomy transepts of the cathedral and lengthening across the quiet greensward of the Close. The great clock that overhangs the High Street strikes six ; and a moment later the quarter chimes from the Guildhall send forth the slow music of their notes, and the hour is struck more slowly still. A pause, and then follow the four double quarter strokes, and the deliberate, dignified hour bell of the cathedral sounds far up in the tower, that is now a golden grey in the rays of the western sun. A longer pause succeeds, and then come the double quarter strokes from the belfry of the College of William of Wykeham, and the six meditative hour strokes afterward. Just in this same way may the hour have sounded in the ears of Jane Austen seventy-two years ago

this 17th of July, 1889. It was the last hour the bells of the ancient city she had loved so much were ever to tell to her, the last which she was ever to heed, for a little later she had done with time.

It was but a very small part of the world upon which she could look out that long-past July afternoon. In front was a narrow street along which the college boys were moving up and down at intervals like restless but irregular shuttles, disappearing and reappearing through the entrance to Commoners' just at hand ; across the roadway a brick wall partly screening the narrow garden-plot of Dr. Gabell, the college head-master, behind which rose the high flint wall of the Close crowned with tufts of crimson flowers and waving streamers of dark ivy. Over this again were the grey tower and roof of the mighty cathedral, its south transept gable just seen above the green leafage of the Close. To the left the street view was bounded by the red brick houses of Kingsgate Street, into which it led ; but to the right the eye might follow the roadway past the stone bridge over one of the streams of the Itchen, that bubbled out beneath the low arch in the wall of Wolvesey Castle, till it turned a sharp corner round the wall of the garden of the college warden. A bit of the Hampshire downs, a shoulder of St. Giles's Hill, closed the prospect here. This was all that she could have seen, and very little it may appear ; but it was, nevertheless, a part of the scenery she had always known, and it was beneath the shadow of the majestic cathedral,



Winchester Cathedral.



familiar to her from childhood, that she had come to die. It was not home, to be sure, but yet home was not far distant; and at the least home faces were near her, and the sister whose love had been the most precious gift of a lifetime was to be with her so long as she could feel the touch of human affection.

It had not been a long life that was so near its gentle ending on that summer evening, — a little less than forty-two years in all. Happy, cheerful, uneventful years they had been, full of affectionate duties and pleasant cares, and latterly touched by the perception of growing fame. She was just entering upon middle life: a woman universally beloved in her circle of acquaintance, and in the maturity of powers not fully recognized by herself and those nearest to her, but which the world outside the Hampshire one she knew best was just beginning to acknowledge. The daughter of a country clergyman, who, so far as we know, was only once in her life two hundred miles from her birthplace; one of a large family with such advantages only as one might fairly claim in justice to the rest, and therefore with no especial pains bestowed upon her education, — it could not have easily occurred to those who knew her as a woman that her name was to become one of the brightest in the literature of her country, or to those who knew her as a novelist that the books which they thought vastly superior to hers would soon gather dust upon their shelves, while hers

were to continue the delight of endless generations. The Annual Register for 1817 makes more or less extended mention of seven persons of note who died in July of that year, — the Rt. Hon. George Ponsonby is herein mourned at length; and the virtues of a Duke of Northumberland, an Earl of Eglinton, a ninth Lord Arundel, a Lady Ann Murray, a Sir William Pearce Ashe A Court, and a daughter of Madame de Staël, are set forth in appropriate terms. No room, however, seems to have been found by the editor of that sedate chronicle to record the death at Winchester, on the 18th of that same month, of an untitled woman whose loss to the age in which she lived was greater than could have been occasioned by the deaths of seventy times seven such as these. But how should the editor of the Annual Register know this? How should he have heard of one whose personality was known to but very few?

The novelists of that time mingled freely in the literary life of the period; and whatever advantages may have arisen from associating with one another they may be presumed to have reaped. But of literary companionship or associations Jane Austen knew little or nothing. She wrote in the seclusion of a country home, — a seclusion much more remote eighty or ninety years ago than now; and echoes only, and these not strong ones, reached her there of the world's applause. That same applause had resounded much more loudly in the ears of Mrs. Radcliffe or Madame d'Arblay; but long be-

fore their ears were stopped with dust, the pleasing noise had almost died away. Curiosity only leads us now to turn the pages of their books; some feeling much more permanent sends us to Miss Austen's. It was their lot as well as that of several of their contemporaries in the same field to outlive the popularity they so quickly acquired; it was that of Jane Austen to die while the sun of her fame was not half risen. The sweets of success she but barely tasted. Yet for these same sweets I do not think she at any time very greatly cared. Sincere appreciation of her writing pleased her as honest praise must please any conscientious literary worker; but it was not indispensable to her, and no amount of admiration of her genius could have destroyed the fine poise of her nature.

But if Miss Austen missed many of the rewards received by women of that day who labored in the same field of literature, she at the same time escaped many of the trials which are the portion of those whose fame is quickly won. The malice of detractors, the jealousies of the unsuccessful, the hundred stings which may be felt in a literary life, — from these she was securely shielded by her comparative seclusion and the slow though sure growth of her fame. She surely stands in no need of our regretful sympathy, this woman of talent cut off from earthly existence in the early dawning of an ever-brightening renown. Life had already brought her large measure of happiness and affection; she had been able to exercise the gift that was hers

with little hindrance ; and she had met with approval of her work in quarters where approbation was helpful and stimulating. She did not feel that her abilities were unappreciated or overlooked.

Nor were they. On the contrary, they were admired to as great an extent as the taste of seventy-five years ago would admit. General favor it was impossible for them to obtain at once, because they appealed to tastes then shared by few. Miss Austen herself could not realize *how* excellent her writing was, for there was nothing in precisely the same lines with which to compare it, and her critics of course had precisely the same obstacle to meet. She must not, then, be looked upon as one who was underestimated while she lived. If we judge of her work by the standards of her own time, we shall see that she was not undervalued ; and most certainly we cannot complain because her contemporaries did not estimate her by criteria they had not yet reached. She had, in such measure as was possible then, the honor she deserved ; she accepted it, was grateful for it, and did not lament or feel the want of more ; and her life moved serenely on, therefore, to its early close unfretted by fears that it was missing what it should have won. We may be very sure that she never thought of pitying herself ; and why, then, should we compassionate her ? Rather ought we to rejoice with her that life brought to her all the happiness it did, filling it so full that no room was left for regrets.

What that life was, begun in a retired country

rectory and ended not quite forty-two years later in a small provincial city a few miles distant and beside the walls of its venerable cathedral, the pages which follow attempt more or less imperfectly to tell.

II.

CHILDHOOD AT STEVENTON.

FOLDED securely away in a valley among the low chalk downs of North Hampshire is a straggling thatch-roofed village, with little to distinguish it, except perhaps to one who knows it well, from countless other hamlets hidden in sheltered coombes of southern England. The Southwestern Railway crosses the valley on a high curved embankment which shuts off the view to the west ; but so insignificant is the village considered by the railway authorities that no station has ever been built for its accommodation. Winchester, fourteen miles south, and Basingstoke, some six or seven north-west, are the nearest towns known to any but the Hampshire world ; and the traveller to this quiet valley, approaching it from Winchester, has before him a walk or drive of four miles after leaving the train at Micheldever, and one of about the same distance if he leaves it at Overton, in the opposite direction.

The highroad to Deane turns sharply to the left at the end of the village, and disappears under the embankment ; and it is along this road, for the distance of half a mile preceding the turn, that the

dozen or fifteen houses of the neighborhood are situated, several being of distinctly recent date. Opposite one which seems from its appearance the oldest of them all, the road to North Waltham turns off to the east; and just north of this, approached through a small bit of thicket, is the rectory, a cheerful two-storied mansion, at the top of a well-kept, sunny lawn. From here the view widens: to westward distant meadows, bordered by broad lines of hedgerow, spread themselves out upon the swelling downs, and patches of woodland thrust their dark masses between. South of the sloping lawn, and across the road last mentioned, is a small field, shaded at one end by large elms. A disused pump here, and a depression which must once have been a cellar, are now all the signs remaining to mark the spot where the rectory of Steventon stood, seventy years ago. Along the eastern side of this small meadow a very broad hedgerow path leads up the slope to the church, less than half a mile to the south. Here, beyond the end of the hedgerow path, surrounded by a small churchyard and shaded on the north by a great hollow yew of dateless antiquity, is the church of St. Nicholas, seven centuries old. Close at hand are the spacious and carefully trimmed lawns of a large modern manor-house; and south of this, across an exquisitely soft stretch of green turf, is the former manor, a long grey stone façade of the early Tudor period, and, save for its western end, nearly hidden by shining ivy leaves and the sweeping branches of

ancient trees. From the broad lawns and gardens here, the tiny village along the shaded highway cannot be seen; and the eye ranges beyond its green tree-tops over sunny slopes covered with fertile fields, some of which, no doubt to the farmer's disquiet, are blazing with scarlet poppies. A peaceful, pastoral landscape it is, with no very strong features, but one possessing many charms, and of which a real lover of Nature would not easily tire.

Thus looks Steventon and its vicinity to-day. The lapse of a century cannot have made any great changes in its aspect. Remove from the scene the modern manor-house of red brick, the stunted spire that crowns but does not adorn the tower of St. Nicholas's church, and at least a third of the houses in the village; take away the railway and the present rectory, and in the field beneath it replace its predecessor under the tall elms,—and then, with some minor changes in the disposition of gardens and hedgerows, we have the Steventon which Jane Austen's eyes looked upon a hundred years ago: then, as now, a handful of homes wholly withdrawn from the turmoil of the outside world.

To this same Steventon came to live, in 1771, the Reverend George Austen, then between thirty-five and forty years of age. Left an orphan at the age of nine, he had been cared for and educated by his uncle, Francis Austen, a lawyer of Tunbridge. From Tunbridge Grammar School he received one of its Oxford scholarships, and entered St. John's



THE CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS, STEVENTON.



College, where he subsequently obtained a fellowship. As a young man he was known at Oxford as "the handsome proctor;" and when living at Bath, after having passed his seventieth year, his clearly-cut, refined features and snowy hair made him a centre of observation in all companies. No portrait of him remains, if indeed one were ever painted; but at Chawton House I saw, in the possession of his great-grandson, a full-length silhouette likeness of him, in which his elegant figure and scholarly profile are very observable. He is here represented as one of a group, and holds by the hand his son James, who was apparently at that period a lad of eight or nine years.

In 1764, being then in orders, he had come into the possession of two adjoining Hampshire livings, Steventon and Deane, — the latter the gift of his uncle, who had purchased it for his nephew, the former the gift of his second cousin, Mr. Knight of Chawton and Godmersham. In the same year that he obtained these preferments he married Cassandra Leigh, the youngest daughter of Reverend Thomas Leigh of Henley-on-Thames, whose elder brother, Dr. Theophilus Leigh, was Master of Balliol for more than fifty years. At the beginning of their married life, Mr. and Mrs. Austen had charge of a little son of Warren Hastings, committed to the care of Mr. Austen some three years before his marriage, most probably, as Miss Austen's earliest biographer suggests, through the influence of the clergyman's sister, Mrs. Hancock, whose

husband was an officer in Hastings's Indian command. This lad, George Hastings, died young, to the great grief of the Austens, to whom he had become very dear.

At Deane the three eldest children of the Austens were born, James, Edward, and Henry Thomas; and not long after the birth of their third son, in 1771, they removed, as has been stated, from Deane to Steventon, which remained their home for thirty years. The journey was a brief one, less than two miles, but the road, now so well kept, was then but a cart-path furrowed by deep ruts; and Mrs. Austen, who had not yet recovered her strength, was placed upon a feather bed laid upon the softest household articles in the wagon, that she might make the short trip in comparative comfort.

The house to which the Austens now came with their three young children, the oldest a lad of six, though somewhat better than many country rectories at that time, could not be said to have been anything more than fairly commodious and comfortable; and it was certainly greatly inferior to the handsome stone rectory which looks down upon the site of its predecessor. In front a carriage-drive, or "sweep," as Jane would have styled it, wound under the elms from the gateway; and at the back, on the southerly side, the gentle upward slope was occupied by a moderately large flower and kitchen garden; and above this was a terrace of close green turf. Perhaps this terrace, as Miss Austen's nephew and biographer pleasantly

assumes, may have been in the mind of the novelist when, in the opening chapter of "Northanger Abbey," she describes the heroine's childish joy in "rolling down the greensward at the back of the house." On the east line of the garden was a thatched mud wall, counterparts of which may still be seen in many a Hampshire village, while the terrace merged itself to westward in a hedgerow path which bounded the rectory meadows on the south. Seats were placed at intervals along this shaded path, which to the Austens was known as "The Wood Walk." On the farther side of the garden a broader hedgerow path led then, as now, up the slope to the church and manor-house, which in the Austens' time and for generations later was occupied by the Digweed family. In the field beyond this path was a small pond, or "duck-pool," which has long since disappeared.

It was a pleasant nook of which all these were the outward features, — a spot which the Austens came to love very dearly ; yet we are told that when Mrs. Austen was still Miss Leigh and was being shown the scenery of the locality, she expressed some disappointment, missing no doubt the lovely river views of her Henley home. However this may have been, the seven years' residence at Deane had by this time accustomed her to the waterless Hampshire landscapes ; and whatever regrets she may once have felt had long passed away when she came to Steventon to live.

In the summer of 1889, I was shown some of

the parish registers at the Steventon rectory. One of the earlier records contains a careful copy of the entries originally made by Mr. Austen's predecessor in the neat handwriting of Mr. Austin, who signs his own name as copyist. Then follow in the same neat hand the dates of the baptisms, marriages, and burials throughout the long years of his ministry, the careful penmanship growing a little less firm in the closing years of the century. Here is one of the early entries which has an interest for us.

"Cassandra Elizabeth, daughter of the Rev'd Mr George Austen, Rector of the Parish, and Cassandra, his Wife, was privately Baptiz'd Jan^r 9th, 1773. Rec'd into the church Jan^r 25th the same year."

The records are not of frequent occurrence in the register, for neither births nor deaths followed hard upon each other in this small village, and marriages were few and far between. We have but to turn a leaf, then, to find an entry made nearly three years later, which recorded an event of great subsequent importance to the world of letters.

"Jane, daughter of the Rev'd Mr George Austen, Rector of this Parish and Cassandra, his Wife, was privately Baptized Dec. 17th, 1775. Rec'd into the church April 5th, 1776."

The date of Jane Austen's birth, which was December 16, preceded the private baptism by one

day only ; but the birth and baptism of the elder sister occurred on the same day.

Our knowledge of the childhood of Jane Austen must remain, owing to the scanty information to be obtained respecting it, very largely inferential. It was her mother's custom to put out her children to be nursed at a cottage in the village ; and Jane was probably no exception to this rule. Mr. and Mrs. Austen paid daily visits to the cottage in behalf of the infant's welfare, and it was frequently brought to the rectory by the nurse ; but until old enough to run about freely and to talk with some approach to clearness, the cottage and not the rectory was the child's home, probably for the first two years of her life. Whatever may now be thought of the practice, it was common enough in English homes a hundred years ago ; and the Austens in following it were therefore doing nothing unusual.

The Steventon rectory was already full of young life when Jane's year or two with her cottage nurse came to an end. Her eldest brother James was now a lad of twelve ; and between these two were Edward, who was not far from nine, Henry, a boy of six, and Cassandra and Francis, with a difference of less than a year in their ages, and about three and a half and four and a half years respectively. A year or two later, Charles, the youngest member of all, was added to the circle. With so large a number of children, among whom too were included several pupils of Mr. Austen's who

were boarded in the family, we cannot have reason to suppose that the rectory was at any time a dull place to live in. The Austens' nearest neighbors were the Digweed family at the manor-house; and the intercourse between the two houses was frequent and friendly. At Ashe, two miles away, lived the Lefroy family, with whom the inmates of the Steventon rectory were especially intimate. Mr. Lefroy held the living of Ashe, and his wife was a sister of Sir Egerton Brydges, the writer. He was a regular visitor at Ashe, and in his autobiography, published in 1834, occurs the earliest existing personal notice of Jane Austen, which reads as follows: —

“The nearest neighbors of the Lefroys were the Austens of Steventon. I remember Jane Austen, the novelist, as a little child. She was very intimate with Mrs. Lefroy and much encouraged by her. Her mother was a Miss Leigh, whose paternal grandmother was sister to the first Duke of Chandos. Mr. Austen was of a Kentish family, of which several branches have been settled in the Weald of Kent, and some are still remaining there. When I knew Jane Austen, I never suspected that she was an authoress; but my eyes told me that she was fair and handsome, slight and elegant, but with cheeks a little too full.”

Surely the hobby of a lover of genealogies was never more perversely brought to the front. We are longing for personal details of one who was of vastly more importance to the world in general

than the garrulous Sir Egerton had ever been, and he suddenly cuts off his tale and talks of her great-grandmother !

At the Ashe rectory were the two boys, John and Benjamin ; and no long period was suffered to lapse in which the young Austens and the young Lefroys were not in each other's company. Many years later, Benjamin, the youngest boy at Ashe, married the oldest daughter of James Austen, thus strengthening the bond between the families. Two cousins of the Austens, Edward and Susan Cooper, the children of Mrs. Austen's oldest sister, were in the habit of paying long visits at Steventon, much to the delight of the children at the two rectories.

The Steventon household contained when Jane was about thirteen another inmate, in the person of the young Countess de Feuillade, the daughter of Mr. Austen's sister, Mrs. Hancock. Her husband had been guillotined during the French Revolution ; and after that event she was for some years a member of her uncle's family, in which she had often been a visitor previously. Many years later she became the second wife of her cousin Henry Austen. The countess was a brilliant, highly accomplished young woman, used to the most polished and brilliant society in France ; and what a resource such a person must have been in a country home full of unsophisticated young people can easily be imagined. It is not improbable that she assisted her cousins Cassandra and Jane in their study of French, for her knowledge of that lan-

guage was so perfect that she passed everywhere in France for a native of the country. But however much she may have contributed to their education, she certainly took an active part in the amusements of her cousins. Private theatricals were in high favor at Steventon, the young people's summer theatre being the barn, and the family dining-room constituting their winter one. The principal feminine rôles in these representations were always taken by the countess; and the prologues and epilogues were written by James Austen, whose son declares them to have been exceptionally vigorous and amusing. The first of these dramas was acted, before a very limited audience, we must believe, when Jane was not far from twelve years old, and the last when she was fifteen. It is not improbable that she may have taken parts of more or less prominence in the casts of some of the latest of these plays; and we know that she certainly acted in parlor theatricals in later life. The late Sir William Heathcote of Hursley remembered being with her at a Twelfth Night party when he was a little boy, on which occasion she, having drawn the part of Mrs. Candor, acted it with appreciation and spirit. Undoubtedly the realistic descriptions of the amateur rehearsals in "Mansfield Park" had their source in the author's recollections of the Steventon dramas of her early girlhood.

It will readily enough be seen from what has been said of Steventon rectory, its inmates and neighbors and frequent visitors, that remote as it

was from towns, its young people did not of necessity lead either a cramped or monotonous life. Their active, ingenious minds devised many plans for amusement, and their studies were always intelligently superintended. Mrs. Austen was a person of much native ability and quick imagination, and could express herself with ease and elegance in writing as well as in speaking. From her it is probable that Jane inherited her imaginative temperament and her lively sense of humor, the latter an inheritance which was shared with her brother Henry. Mr. Austen was a man of scholarly tastes and acquirements, and besides preparing his sons James and Henry for the university, directed the studies of his younger children in addition to those of his pupils, and the many pastoral cares which fall to the lot of a country clergyman.

Nearly eleven years intervened between Jane and her oldest brother James, born at Deane rectory Feb. 13, 1765. He, while still a very young man at Oxford, was esteemed one of the ablest writers among the undergraduates, being particularly well versed in English literature. In the opinion of his son, James Austen directed the reading of Jane and Cassandra, and was instrumental in forming their literary tastes. This seems not at all unlikely. A bright, studious fellow, fresh from the university, and returning full of enthusiasms respecting his favorite authors, would no doubt find it a particularly congenial task to impart those same enthusiasms to his young sis-

ters, neither of them old enough to question his opinions or call for a reversion of his judgments.

Of her second brother, Edward, born at Deane Oct. 7, 1768, Jane saw much less in her childhood than of James, for when quite a young lad, he was adopted by his third cousin, Thomas Knight of Godmersham Park, Kent, and Chawton House, Hants. He inherited his cousin's estates in 1794, and in 1812 took the family name of his generous relative. In later life, as will be seen in these pages, Jane was much in the company of this brother, and seems to have been rather fonder of him than of James, though perhaps not consciously so.

Henry Thomas, the third brother, born at Deane in 1771, seems to have inherited very much of his father's eager, joyous spirit, and to have notably excelled in conversation. As a delightful companion for young and old he was unequalled; but unfortunately his ease of manner and adroitness in adapting himself to any society were not supplemented with that singleness of purpose which insures success. He was always full of schemes and plans which usually came to nought, and at which his brothers and sisters learned to smile good-humoredly, and perhaps, as years went on, a little sadly, foreseeing the probable result of each in its turn.

Francis, the fourth brother, was born at Steven-ton near the close of 1773, and to him the firmness and decision so much needed in the character of

Henry seem to have been given in double measure. He entered the navy, where his talents soon gained him promotion. As an officer he was a strict disciplinarian, rigid in demanding the respect due from others to his office, and punctilious in according the proper amount of deference from himself to others. His religious convictions were exceedingly strong ; and he was never wanting in the courage of his opinions, at one time being known in the navy as "*the* officer who kneeled in church," from which we may infer a certain laxity of religious deportment on the part of his naval contemporaries. His disposition was a happy and contented one ; and the precision and deliberation so characteristic of his later life must have been admirably set off in the home-life at the rectory by the sanguine impetuosity of his next older brother.

Charles, born in 1778, and the youngest of the seven, is said to have greatly resembled his sister Jane in sweetness of temper and lovable disposition, and to have had the good fortune throughout his long life of attaching others strongly to himself. Like his brother Francis, he entered the navy, and soon made his way upward from the ranks of the midshipmen, winning as easily by means of his warm-hearted, generous temperament the unstinted affection of his comrades in the service as he had that of his brothers and sisters.

It was this same affectionate gentleness of disposition, noticeable in every individual of the Austen

family, and reaching perhaps its strongest development in Charles Austen, the youngest of them all, which bound its members so closely together. All, with the possible exception of Henry Austen, were persons of strong domestic tastes, by no means averse to frequent contact with the world, but finding, as children, their chief enjoyments among themselves, and as men and women, their highest pleasures in their own family circles.

Of Cassandra Austen we shall hear much in the course of this narrative ; but a few words at this point may be said of what she was in their childhood to her sister Jane, to whom she was always dearer than any one else in the whole world. The elder of the two by three years, she, who had been the one girl among so many boys, must have had, as soon as the small Jane was transferred from the cottage-nursery to the rectory, a peculiar affection for the longed-for sister. From the very first they shared the same room, and whatever pains or pleasures fell to the portion of one were sympathetically those of the other also. Outwardly there was probably more demonstration of affection on the part of Jane, Cassandra's nature being less impulsive in this respect ; but I am inclined to believe that the affection Cassandra gave was no less than that she received, although she may have found more difficulty in its expression. Still, as we possess none of her letters to Jane, it is not possible to speak positively on this latter point. That hers was the stronger personality may perhaps

be inferred from the fact of Jane's sisterly deference to her through their whole life, although the difference in age may to some extent account for this, and from the general opinion of the family that while "Cassandra had the *merit* of having her temper always under command, Jane had the happiness of a temper that never needed to be commanded." In other words, the amiability of the younger was constitutional, the serenity of the older the result of the exercise of self-discipline.

When it became evident that the home instruction could not longer suffice in all ways for the needs of a rapidly growing girl, Cassandra was sent to Mrs. La Tournelle's school at Reading, and thither Jane accompanied her. It was not expected that at Jane's tender age she would be able to derive much benefit from the instruction at Reading; but she was allowed to go because if left at home she would have been utterly miserable without her chief companion, for, as Mrs. Austen used sometimes to say, "if Cassandra were going to have her head cut off, Jane would insist upon sharing the same fate." It was not in all respects a strong, self-reliant nature of which such a remark could be made, however lightly, but one which nevertheless was capable of intense feeling and boundless self-abnegation.

"So they grew together,
Like to a double cherry, seeming parted,
But yet a union in partition."

III.

LIFE AT STEVENTON; FIRST VISIT TO BATH; EARLIEST ATTEMPTS AT WRITING.

PRECISELY how old the sisters were at the time of their being sent to school at Reading does not anywhere appear in the family records; but we may safely assume the event to have been, in Jane's case at least, the first going away from home. After that date, whenever it may have been, Jane and Cassandra were from time to time welcome visitors in Bath, at the house of their mother's brother, Mr. Leigh Perrot, and at the house of her sister, who, with her husband, Dr. Cooper, the Vicar of Sonning, near Reading, resided in Bath. One of these visits, quite possibly the earliest, must have been paid by Jane in 1791, on which occasion a portrait was painted of her by the then popular artist, Zoffani, representing her as a sweet-faced girl of not more than fifteen. This portrait was long in the possession of Colonel Austen, of Kippington, who is said to have been Jane's godfather, and it was therefore most probably painted at his desire. The present owner, Reverend John Morland Rice, of Bramber Rectory, Steyning, Surrey, a grand-nephew of the original of the portrait, was bequeathed it

by Dr. Harding Newman (late Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford), whose stepmother had received it from Colonel Austen.

No particulars concerning this visit have been preserved ; but very probably the sisters were together when it took place, since their correspondence, when separated, was frequent and regular, and it was Cassandra's custom to retain all her sister's letters. That no letters of her own to Jane exist, is no doubt owing to her having destroyed whatever letters of hers she may have found among her sister's papers after the death of the latter. Supposing her to have done this, we cannot but regret the fact, for without question they would, if we had them, add much to our knowledge of these two lives which were so much to each other.

What Jane Austen thought of Bath a few years later we know ; but it would have been of exceptional interest if we could have been made familiar with her first impressions of that gay city. To the young country girl, who had hitherto seen no places larger than Reading, Winchester, and possibly Southampton, the first sight of the beautiful, pleasure-loving town on the banks of the winding Avon must have been like a glimpse into some fair and strange new world. Bath was then, as it had been for more than a century, London writ small. Amusement was its god ; and Christopher Anstey was its prophet, none the less popular because he was not always a sayer of smooth things.

Here in the narrower streets leading to the Abbey

and the Pump Room one might have seen in the Bath season all the rank and fashion, the wealth and wit of London passing between the dark-fronted houses. "The Ladies of St. James's," who, when in London, went "swinging to the play," now in pretended search of health went daily in the same fashion to the baths and the Pump Room, attended by the same throng of gallants and men of fashion who filled their London drawing-rooms. The beautiful Misses Gubbins were now the reigning beauties in Bath, having as rivals the daughter of the Archbishop of Tuam and Miss Bedingfield. When Jane Austen went on Sundays to the fashionable Laura Chapel a few years later, she may have seen all these people at their devotions in that home of aristocratic piety, and near them the famous Mrs. Piozzi, short and stout, with a patch of rouge on each cheek, or the Duchess of York, with brown hair falling about her face, but, let us hope, without the retinue of dogs of assorted sizes which usually attended her everywhere else.

Almost any day she might have seen in the thoroughfares of Bath or in the Pump Room many of the famous men of her time on the occasion of her first visit, — Melmoth, the noted scholar, William Hoare, the Royal Academician, the brilliant Sheridan, the yet unappreciated Herschels, William and Caroline, and the host of their contemporaries in literature, science, and art, who were familiar figures in Bath in 1791.

There was in the life of the city at that time a glitter of extravagance, an excess of parade, which though somewhat less pronounced than in the days of Beau Nash, thirty years before, might still dazzle and confuse the wide-eyed gaze of fifteen. But if it did so, the bewilderment was but brief; for hers was too clear-sighted a vision to be long in doubt between shadow and substance, and to lose sight of the realities hidden beneath all the multitude of vain shows that made up the outward semblance of Bath in the last decade of the eighteenth century. However it all may have impressed her as a girl, she did not when a young woman resident there unduly esteem its fascinations.

How early she began to write is unknown; but copy-books of hers containing stories and sketches written when she must have been not far from twelve are in existence, and by the time she was sixteen there was a goodly accumulation of these. No doubt that first visit to Bath, and the glimpse of the great world which it opened to her, stimulated the powers she was already beginning to exercise. What she thought in later life of the habit of writing in childhood may be learned from what one of her nieces, who was a girl of twelve at the time of her aunt's death, has said: —

“As I grew older, my aunt would talk to me more seriously of my reading and amusements. I had taken early to writing verses and stories, and am sorry to think how I troubled her with reading them. She was very kind about it, and always had some praise to

bestow ; but at last she warned me against spending too much time upon them. She said — how well I recollect it ! — that she knew writing stories was a great amusement, and *she* thought a harmless one, though many people, she was aware, thought otherwise ; but that at my age it would be bad for me to be much taken up with my own compositions. Later still — it was after she had gone to Winchester — she sent me a message to this effect, — that if I would take her advice I should cease writing till I was sixteen ; that she had herself often wished she had read more and written less in the corresponding years of her own life.”

It is a slight though not unimportant insight into Jane Austen's life that these words afford us. In the bright young niece, whose teens were still some years ahead, absorbed in the pleasant task of transcribing her thoughts and fancies, the aunt not unnaturally saw a reflection of her own childhood, and recalling her own delight in similar tasks, gave a fond encouragement. Her conviction that both sides of a question should be regarded, however, must have made her give the contrary opinion of other people along with her own, and her sense of proportion included the added warning. Then when she felt herself passing the portals of a newer life, came the last word of thoughtful, matured advice, founded upon a perception that to some extent that necessary proportion had not always been preserved by herself in the years when girlhood was developing into womanhood. She may have lived to think, too, that some of

her own talent might be the heritage of the little girl whose tastes and habits were so like what hers had been in those far-off but well-remembered days at Steventon.

Of her own juvenile compositions Mr. Austen-Leigh tells us that "her earliest stories are of a slight and flimsy texture, and are generally intended to be nonsensical, but the nonsense has much spirit in it. They are usually preceded by a dedication of mock solemnity to one of her family. It would seem that the grandiloquent dedications prevalent in those days had not escaped her youthful penetration."

It would have been strange indeed if they had, for nothing in the nature of affectation or pomposity which came within her range of observation seems to have escaped from her presence unmasked, or at least undetected, through the whole of her after-life. She disliked shams as heartily as a Carlyle could have desired ; but gentle, humorous satire, rather than hammer-headed vituperation, was the weapon she wielded against them.

The nature of some of her earlier work may be seen in the fragment which follows. One can without difficulty imagine the handsome old clergyman, her father, smiling over the mock heroic dedication to himself, the indulgent approval of her mother, the shouts of delight from the older brothers over "little Jane's comedy," and what the young writer valued most of all, the generous praise of her beloved sister. True, it is but the

merest trifle, but yet a trifle that is not without an especial interest considered in the light which its inventor's later productions throw upon it.

THE MYSTERY.

AN UNFINISHED COMEDY.

Dedication.

TO THE REV. GEORGE AUSTEN.

SIR, — I humbly solicit your patronage to the following comedy, which, though an unfinished one, is, I flatter myself, as complete a *Mystery* as any of its kind.

I am, sir, your most humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

THE MYSTERY, A COMEDY.

Dramatis Personæ.

<i>Men.</i>	<i>Women.</i>
Colonel Elliott.	Fanny Elliott.
Old Humbug.	Mrs. Humbug
Young Humbug.	<i>and</i>
Sir Edward Spangle	Daphne.
<i>and</i>	
Corydon.	

ACT I.

SCENE I. — *A Garden.*

Enter CORYDON.

Corydon. But hush ! I am interrupted.

[*Exit* CORYDON.]

Enter OLD HUMBUG and his SON, talking.

Old Hum. It is for that reason that I wish you to follow my advice. Are you convinced of its propriety?

Young Hum. I am, sir, and will certainly act in the manner you have pointed out to me.

Old Hum. Then let us return to the house.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II. *A parlor in HUMBUG'S house.* MRS. HUMBUG and FANNY discovered at work.

Mrs. Hum. You understand me, my love?

Fanny. Perfectly, ma'am; pray continue your narration.

Mrs. Hum. Alas! it is nearly concluded; for I have nothing more to say on the subject.

Fanny. Ah, here is Daphne.

Enter DAPHNE.

Daphne. My dear Mrs. Humbug, how d'y'e do? Oh, Fanny, it is all over!

Fanny. Is it indeed?

Mrs. Hum. I'm very sorry to hear it.

Fanny. Then 't was to no purpose that I

Daphne. None upon earth.

Mrs. Hum. And what is to become of —?

Daphne. Oh, 't is all settled.

[*Whispers* MRS. HUMBUG.

Fanny. And how is it determined?

Daphne. I'll tell you. [*Whispers* FANNY.

Mrs. Hum. And is he to —?

Daphne. I'll tell you all I know of the matter.

[*Whispers* MRS. HUMBUG and FANNY.

Fanny. Well, now I know everything about it, I'll go away.

Mrs. Hum. }
Daphne. } And so will I.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III. *The curtain rises, and discovers SIR EDWARD SPANGLE reclined in an elegant attitude on a sofa, fast asleep.*

Enter COLONEL ELLIOTT.

Col. E. My daughter is not here, I see There lies Sir Edward. Shall I tell him the secret? No, he'll certainly blab it. But he's asleep and won't hear me; so I'll e'en venture.

[Goes up to SIR EDWARD, whispers him, and exit.]

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

FINIS.

But fragmentary writing of this character was succeeded by another stage of literary activity, in which were produced a number of stories, said to be, for some of them are still extant, not without value. She however never sought to publish these; and her family, reverencing her very probable desire, have never allowed them to be printed. It must not be imagined that the majority of these compositions resemble in any important particulars the novels which have made her famous, differing in degree only and not in kind. On the contrary, they are very dissimilar both as to subject and treatment. Mr. Austen-Leigh observes in relation to them that "her mind seems to have been working in a very different direction from that into which it ultimately settled. Instead of presenting faithful copies of nature, these tales were generally burlesques, ridiculing the improbable events and exaggerated sentiments she had met with in sun-

dry silly romances. Something of this fancy is to be found in 'Northanger Abbey,' but she soon left it far behind in her subsequent course. It would seem as if she were first taking note of all the faults to be avoided, and curiously considering how she ought *not* to write before she attempted to put forth her strength in the right direction."

It was in this kind of literary occupation, varied by performance of the ordinary home duties which must have been hers, and by frequent visits to relatives in Somerset and Kent as well as in her native Hampshire, that the years of Jane Austen's life from sixteen to twenty were passed. The first draft, as it may be called, of the novel "Sense and Sensibility" is undoubtedly a later effort of this period. It was entitled "Elinor and Marianne," and, much elaborated and rigorously revised, forms the groundwork of the subsequent matured narration.

At the time of its composition her fancy had lost much of its extravagant tone; and when she recast the tale some years after in its present form, discarding entirely the epistolary conduct of the story, the element of the burlesque had disappeared from her work.

Whether the tale "Lady Susan" may be dated from this period cannot be satisfactorily determined. The form of it, — for the story is managed wholly by letters, — and the fact that she seems to have made no effort to publish it, would seem to refer its preparation to a time anterior to the writing of "Pride and Prejudice;" and this is the view

taken by the members of her own family. A certain amount of exaggeration in the drawing of the principal figure, and a perceptible want of clearness in the outlining of some of the lesser personages, seem to my mind to confirm this opinion and definitely to place this work therefore in the number of those written before "Pride and Prejudice."

At the opening of 1796, Cassandra Austen paid a visit to her friend, Mrs Elizabeth Fowle, who was living at Kintbury, in Berkshire, about a dozen miles from Steventon. Her twenty-third birthday occurred while she was absent from home; and to her, on that occasion, Jane wrote the earliest of her letters which has been preserved. Indeed, it is the first piece of her writing the date of which is absolutely beyond question, and is therefore valuable for that if for no other reason. It is in no sense a remarkable letter, but merely such as any sprightly girl of twenty might send to a sister from whom she had no reserves, and who would understand at once all its playful allusions.

STEVENTON, Saturday (January 9).

In the first place, I hope you will live twenty-three years longer. Mr. Tom Lefroy's birthday was yesterday, so that you are very near of an age.

After this necessary preamble, I shall proceed to inform you that we had an exceeding good ball last night, and that I was very much disappointed at not seeing Charles Fowle of the party, as I had previously heard of his being invited. In addition to our set at the Harwoods' ball, we had the Grants, St. Johns,

Lady Rivers, her three daughters and a son, Mr ¹ and Miss Heathcote, Mrs. Lefevre, two Mr. Watkins, Mr. J. Portal, Miss Deanes, two Miss Ledgers, and a tall clergyman who came with them, whose name Mary would never have guessed.

We were so terrible good as to take James in our carriage, though there were three of us before; but indeed he deserves encouragement for the very great improvement which has lately taken place in his dancing. Miss Heathcote is pretty, but not near so handsome as I expected. Mr. H. began with Elizabeth, and afterwards danced with her again; but *they* do not know how *to be particular*. I flatter myself, however, that they will profit by the three successive lessons which I have given them.

You scold me so much in the nice long letter which I have this moment received from you that I am almost afraid to tell you how my Irish friend ² and I behaved. Imagine to yourself everything most profligate and shocking in the way of dancing and sitting down together. I *can* expose myself, however, only *once more*, as he leaves the country soon after next Friday, on which day we *are* to have a dance at Ashe after all. He is a very gentlemanlike, good-looking, pleasant young man, I assure you. But as to our ever having met, except at the three last balls, I cannot say much; for he is so excessively laughed at about me at Ashe that he is ashamed of coming to Steventon, and ran away when we called on Mrs. Lefroy a few days ago.

We left Warren at Dean Gate, in our way, home

¹ Afterward Sir William Heathcote, and father to the Sir William Heathcote mentioned on page 26.

² Mr. Thomas Lefroy, afterward Lord Chief-Justice of Ireland; born in 1776, died in 1869.

last night, and he is now on his road to town. He left his love, etc. to you, and I will deliver it when we meet. Henry¹ goes to Harden to-day, in his way to his Master's degree. We shall feel the loss of these two most agreeable young men exceedingly; and shall have nothing to console us till the arrival of the Coopers on Tuesday. As they will stay here till the Monday following, perhaps Caroline will go to the Ashe ball with me, though I dare say she will not.

I danced twice with Warren last night, and once with Mr. Charles Watkins, and to my inexpressible astonishment, I entirely escaped John Lyford. I was forced to fight hard for it, however. We had a very good supper, and the greenhouse was illuminated in a very elegant manner.

We had a visit yesterday morning from Mr. Benjamin Portal, whose eyes are as handsome as ever. Everybody is extremely anxious for your return; but as you cannot come home by the Ashe ball, I am glad I have not fed them with false hopes. James danced with Alithea, and cut up the turkey with great perseverance. You say nothing of the silk stockings; I flatter myself, therefore, that Charles has not purchased any, as I cannot very well afford to pay for them, — all my money is spent in buying white gloves and pink persian. I wish Charles had been at Many-down, because he would have given you some description of my friend; and I think you must be impatient to hear something about him.

Henry is still hankering after the Regulars; and as his project of purchasing the adjutancy of the Oxfordshire is now over, he has got a scheme in his head about getting a lieutenantcy and adjutancy in the Eighty-sixth, — a new-raised regiment, which he fan-

¹ Henry Austen.

cies will be ordered to the Cape of Good Hope. I heartily hope that he will, as usual, be disappointed in this scheme. We have trimmed up and given away all the old paper hats of Mamma's manufacture; I hope you will not regret the loss of yours. After I had written the above, we received a visit from Mr. Tom Lefroy and his cousin. The latter is really very well-behaved now; and as for the other, he has but *one* fault, which time will, I trust, entirely remove, — it is that his morning coat is a great deal too light. He is a very great admirer of Tom Jones, and therefore wears the same colored clothes, I imagine, which *he* did when he was wounded.

Sunday. — By not returning till the 19th, you will exactly contrive to miss seeing the Coopers, which I suppose it is your wish to do. We have heard nothing from Charles for some time. One would suppose they must have sailed by this time, as the wind is so favorable. What a funny name Tom has got for his vessel! But he has no taste in names, as we well know, and I dare say he christened it himself. I am sorry for the Beeches' loss of their little girl, especially as it is the one so like me. I condole with Miss M. on her losses, and with Elizabeth on her gains, and ever yours,

J. A.

To MISS AUSTEN,

Rev. Mr. FOWLE'S, Kintbury, Newbury.

The winter not yet half over, and four balls already, with a fifth in the near future! It certainly does not appear as if life in that small village among the chalk downs was found so very monotonous by the dwellers there about a century ago. In the popular imagination Jane Austen has been enshrined as an exceedingly prim, not to say

starched, personage ; and even many who have been willing to admit that she had a good deal that was lovable in her nature, have nevertheless insisted that she was precise. It is difficult to see just how such a misapprehension first arose, but I am rather disposed to attribute it to a hasty glance at the portrait which represents her in a cap, — for in the average mind of the present, caps and rigidity of deportment are indissolubly associated. A second look at the portrait — this time at the animated features beneath the cap — will go far to correct this conception ; and a reading of her letters can hardly fail to shatter the stiffly outlined image which the name of Jane Austen summons before the minds of very many people whose hasty impressions have never received the corrective of sober second thought. As a matter of fact, Jane Austen when a young woman entered into the amusements of those about her with hearty enjoyment, and by no means disdained them later in life.

A good deal of speculation has been indulged in respecting the extent of the feeling which may have existed between Jane and the “Mr. Tom Lefroy” mentioned in this epistle. In a subsequent letter to her sister, dated January 16, are several allusions to him, the first being as follows : “Our party to Ashe to-morrow will consist of Edward Cooper, James (for a ball is nothing without *him*), Buller, who is now staying with us, and I. I look forward with great impatience to it, as I rather expect to receive an offer from my friend in

the course of the evening. I shall refuse him, however, unless he promises to give away his white coat." A little farther on she remarks, after speaking of several of her admirers: "I mean to confine myself in future to Mr. Tom Lefroy, for whom I don't care sixpence."

Then on the morning of the ball she writes: "At length the day is come on which I am to flirt my last with Tom Lefroy; and when you receive this it will be over. My tears flow as I write, at the melancholy idea."

That there must have been a considerable degree of intimacy between these two lively young people is undoubtedly true; and this arose in the beginning from the constant intercourse between the Austens and the Lefroys of Ashe, where "Mr. Tom" was visiting, — an intercourse which it is to be presumed suffered no interruption on account of the presence at the latter place of the Irish "admirer of Tom Jones." I think we shall not go far wrong if we assume some amount of mutual attraction resulting from the frequent friendly meetings at the two houses; and we do know with certainty that after the lapse of more than seventy years the Irish Chief-Justice still remembered with pleasure the Jane Austen of his far-off youth, speaking often of her as one who could not fail to be admired, and whom it was impossible for those who had known her ever to forget. Who knows how far the memory of old age may have been tinged with something very like regret that he had

not been moved to put his fate to the touch three score and ten long years before.

His appearance pleased her, it is easy to see, and she was not at all averse to his society; but some of this may have been due to the impression which any handsome, lively, well-connected young man might be presumed to make in a country neighborhood, where the advent of agreeable strangers was not of such frequent occurrence as to dull the palm of entertainment. Yet when all such allowances have been made, it must still appear that she had an unmistakable fancy for this young relative of her old friends at Ashe, which longer acquaintance might have developed into a deeper sentiment. Her heart may not have been touched, but her fancy was certainly attracted. Nearly three years later he was still occasionally present to her mind, for on Nov. 17, 1798, we find her writing thus to Cassandra, then visiting at Godmersham, in Kent:—

“Mrs. Lefroy did come last Wednesday, and the Harwoods came likewise, but very considerably paid their visit before Mrs. Lefroy’s arrival, with whom, in spite of interruptions both from my father and James, I was enough alone to hear all that was interesting, which you will easily credit when I tell you that of her nephew she said nothing at all, and of her friend very little. She did not once mention the name of the former to *me*, and I was too proud to make any enquiries; but on my father’s asking where he was, I learnt that he was gone back to London in his way to Ireland, where he is called to the Bar, and means to practise.”

"Too proud to make any enquiries." Surely the hesitancy here revealed is of a stronger kind than what the presence in the room of her father and brother might occasion, for Mrs. Lefroy seems to have been, in spite of the years between them, after Cassandra, her warmest friend. Another opportunity when the two were together could therefore easily have been found for questioning if the writer of the letter had not been "too proud" to seek further concerning one who may possibly have sent no message of inquiry to his aunt regarding her young friend. Thus "proud," I am very confident, would Jane's own Anne Elliot have been. That she loved we may not assume. That a friendly interest was excited, and that she might have come in time to find this giving place to love, I am quite willing to believe.

But Miss Austen's life was now too full of occupation to leave place for sentimental regrets, even had she been sentimentally disposed, which she most assuredly never was. In August of 1796, she paid a visit to her brother Edward, then living at Rowling, a small Kentish estate belonging to the family of his wife, spending a day or two in London *en route*, and returning to Steventon either at the end of September or early in October. Five letters of hers to Cassandra written at this time are extant, one of which it was intended to reproduce in this volume.

Bits of humor enliven the family doings, which Jane recounts for her sister's benefit; and she does

not disdain a mild pun occasionally. On September 1 she writes: "I am sorry that you found such a conciseness in the strains of my first letter. I must endeavor to make you amends for it when we meet, by some elaborate details which I shall shortly begin composing."

A few lines farther on she compares her position in having to wait for the escort of her brother Henry before she can return home to that of a favorite heroine with her, — the Camilla of Madame d'Arblay's creation: —

"To-morrow I shall be just like Camilla in Mr. Dubster's summer-house; for my Lionel will have taken away the ladder by which I came here, or at least by which I intended to get away, and here I must stay till his return. My situation, however, is somewhat preferable to hers, for I am very happy here, though I should be glad to get home at the end of the month."

She had, indeed, a very generous admiration for the work of her sister novelist, "Camilla" being, however, the novel she preferred to any other of Madame d'Arblay's, at this period at any rate. In a letter written a fortnight later, she again refers to "Camilla" in describing an acquaintance: —

"Miss Fletcher and I were very thick, but I am the thinnest of the two. She wore her purple muslin, which is pretty enough, though it does not become her complexion. There are two traits in her character which are pleasing; namely, she admires 'Camilla,' and drinks no cream in her tea. If you should ever

see Lucy, you may tell her that I scolded Miss Fletcher for her negligence in writing, as she desired me to do, but without being able to bring her to any proper sense of shame; that Miss Fletcher says in her defence that as everybody whom Lucy knew when she was in Canterbury has now left it, she has nothing at all to write to her about. By *everybody*, I suppose Miss Fletcher means that a new set of officers have arrived there; but this is a note of my own."

In this young woman, whose chief interest in the archiepiscopal city centred in the officers of the garrison there, one involuntarily detects a considerable likeness to Lydia Bennet of "Pride and Prejudice," to whom a red-coat was the sight in the whole world most worthy of her attention. Lest Cassandra, who writes of attending a ball at Steventon, should be tempted to fancy that such joys were hers alone, Jane informs her, —

"We were at a ball on Saturday, I assure you. We dined at Goodnestone, and in the evening danced two country-dances and the Boulangeries. I opened the ball with Edward Bridges; the other couples were Lewis Cage and Harriet, Frank and Louisa, Fanny and George. Elizabeth played one country-dance, Lady Bridges the other, which she made Henry dance with her, and Miss Finch played the Boulangeries.

"In reading over the last three or four lines, I am aware of my having expressed myself in so doubtful a manner that if I did not tell you to the contrary, you might imagine it was Lady Bridges who made Henry dance with her at the same time that she was playing, which, if not impossible, must appear a very improbable event to you. But it was Elizabeth who danced."

About the middle of this month (September, 1796) Francis Austen received an appointment on the newly launched frigate "Triton;" and his delight over this piece of good fortune was participated in by his relatives, — for nothing which concerned the welfare of any member of this affectionate family could ever be a matter of indifference to the rest. This appointment seems to have hastened his sister's departure from Rowling, or at least to have left her in some uncertainty as to an escort to London if she did not go when he did: "For as to Henry's coming into Kent again, the time of its taking place is so very uncertain that I should be waiting for *dead men's shoes*."

There appears to have been a little impatience in her mind throughout this visit, as if, much as she enjoyed being at her brother Edward's, she did not at all wish to prolong the time of her absence from home. At Steventon she could of course to a great extent command her own hours, but as a guest at Rowling it was otherwise; and perhaps at this period she desired to be more by herself or to discuss at length with her sister the subject that was beginning to fill the chief place in her thoughts. For years she had been feeling her way to authorship, and now it may have been that she felt moved to attempt something of more importance than she had done hitherto. At all events, she was soon to test the existence of the genius within her.

IV.

THE WRITING OF "PRIDE AND PREJUDICE,"
"SENSE AND SENSIBILITY," AND "NORTH-
ANGER ABBEY;" HOUSEHOLD CARES; PER-
SONAL ATTIRE; PREPARATIONS FOR A BALL;
PROMOTION OF JANE'S BROTHERS.

VERY soon after her return to Steventon in the autumn of 1796, Jane Austen took up work in earnest. The time of tentative apprenticeship was over; that of definite purpose had come. In October, when not yet twenty-one, she began writing a novel which it was her intention to call "First Impressions;" but for this she afterward substituted the much happier title of "Pride and Prejudice." Upon this labor she was engaged for the next ten months, the closing pages being written in August of 1797. Cassandra and most probably the others of the family were aware of the nature of her occupation; and that the sister at least was allowed to read the pages of manuscript while they were being written, is implied in a letter of the 8th of January, 1798, where Jane playfully alludes to Cassandra's familiarity with the story: "I do not wonder at your wanting to read 'First Impressions' again, so seldom as you have gone through it, and that so long ago."

The affectionate interest which the older sister took in the work of the younger is clearly enough

shown in her desire to see again because they were Jane's the chapters which she must have known by this time almost as well as the author of them.

Less than three months elapsed after the completion of "Pride and Prejudice" before its author seems in November to have set about the revision and recasting of "Elinor and Marianne;" and very possibly in accordance with her later plan, the changing of the title to "Sense and Sensibility" was one of the first alterations made upon it.

In this same month of November she made an attempt to publish "Pride and Prejudice," her father on that occasion writing the following letter to Mr. Cadell, the London publisher: —

SIR, — I have in my possession a manuscript novel, comprising 3 vols., about the length of Miss Burney's "Evelina." As I am well aware of what consequence it is that a work of this sort sh^d make its first appearance under a respectable name, I apply to you. I shall be much obliged, therefore, if you will inform me whether you choose to be concerned in it, what will be the expense of publishing it at the author's risk, and what you will venture to advance for the property of it, if on perusal it is approved of. Should you give any encouragement, I will send you the work.

I am, sir, your humble servant,

GEORGE AUSTEN.

STEVENTON, near OVERTON, HANTS,

1st Nov., 1797.

As we read this carefully worded epistle with its elaborate prefatory compliment, and picture to ourselves the manner of its reception, it occasions us

no surprise to learn that the Reverend George Austen's proposal was declined by return of post. The neat, close handwriting, now grown slightly tremulous, would in itself hardly rouse any interest in the mind of the busy publisher, who probably imagined the author of the novel and the writer of the letter to be the same elderly person, with a taste for scribbling, but without capacity for anything beyond it. Steventon, Hants! How should he have heard of that small village, sunk amid the downs of southern England, and perhaps not too well known even to the bishop of whose spiritual preserves it was a part? Or how should merit, from a publisher's point of view, arise out of Hampshire? And then the reference to "Evelina," too, was unfortunate. Doubtless it was another of the numerous imitations of that famous book, too many of which had come to him already. No; it was clearly not a work which it would pay him to concern himself with, and the matter should be settled at once on that presumption. It was very soon, therefore, that the Reverend George Austen had the disappointment of learning that his formally worded proposal was declined, and the further unhappiness of informing his daughter of the fact. For knowing as we do how closely the welfare of any particular Austen was interwoven with that of all, we may be very sure that here was a painful task for the affectionate father, so proud of his daughter's dawning talent.

Whatever feelings of regret Jane Austen may

have had when this summary rejection of her book was made known to her, we have no more means of knowing than we have of ascertaining the nature of Mr. Cadell's reflections in later life regarding his refusal ; but she had too much serenity of disposition to allow this hindrance to her desires to weigh very heavily upon her spirits, and very possibly said little about the affair to any one but Cassandra. Complete discouragement certainly could not have overtaken her, for before the end of the month she was, as we have already seen, diligently at work upon another book. Writing to her was always a pleasure ; fame she was not unduly anxious to win ; and money was not a necessity to her. Discouragement, therefore, if felt at all, could be experienced but momentarily by a nature like hers.

Less time seems to have been spent in writing "Sense and Sensibility" than upon its predecessor, probably because so much of the material was ready to her hand, needing only the careful revision and recasting which she was now competent to give. When it was completed we are not informed, but it must have been within a few months, for, as Mr. Austen-Leigh declares, a third book, "Northanger Abbey," was begun and finished in the next year, 1798.

But writing was not the only occupation of this busy personage in these years of her young womanhood. The health of Mrs. Austen, at no time apparently very strong, was at this period certainly very far from being all that could be desired,

and upon her daughters, therefore, fell the weight of the household cares, — a burden borne during the frequent absences of her sister by Jane alone. The rectory, to be sure, had not now as many inmates as it had held during her childhood, — for two sons had married and were established in homes of their own, two others were absent in the navy, and the fifth was but an occasional visitor at home, while Mr. Austen had for some time ceased to take pupils into his family ; but nevertheless there must still have been abundant room for the exercise of a large amount of housewifely diligence, — a faculty which there seems every reason for supposing Jane to have possessed.

Besides the countless indoor cares which she must have had, a certain amount of cottage visiting — a duty recognized as belonging to the ladies of a country clergyman's household — was accomplished by her, and there were also varied social duties which might not go unperformed. Of all these things she writes with lively freedom to her sister, who for the last four months of 1798 and a portion of the succeeding year was living with her brother, Edward Austen. Mrs. Knight, the widow of his adopted father, had recently made over to him the Knight estate at Godmersham, to which place he had now removed ; and to Godmersham, therefore, Jane's letters were at this period addressed. " I carry about," she observes in one letter, " the keys of the wine closet ; and twice since I began this letter have I had orders to give in the kitchen."

None of the homely family details like this which can possibly interest the absent sister are omitted from the correspondence ; and it is their presence which make the letters so real as we read them nearly a century afterward. No eye but that of Cassandra was expected to behold what Jane's animated pen was recording ; and consequently there is in her pages no posing for the public gaze, even had she been desirous of thus attitudinizing, which I by no means think she was. Could she have foreseen that her letters were to be printed, while they might have contained less of essentially home matters, and would undoubtedly have had a more pronounced literary flavor, they would, I am very sure, have borne but little resemblance to the published letters of many of her contemporaries who seem not to have been able to pen the briefest note without thinking of the possible verdict of posterity upon it.

We might have preferred to know, more frequently than we are permitted to do, Jane Austen's opinion of the books and people of her day, for of course she had very decided views on both books and people, as we can ascertain occasionally from the few allusions she does make ; but these matters she most probably discussed with her sister when they were together, confining the topics of her letters mainly to the incidents of every-day life.

“ Dame Bushell,” she tells Cassandra, “ washes for us only one week more, as Sukey has got a place. John Steevens' wife undertakes our purification. She

does not look as if anything she touches would ever be clean, but who knows? We do not seem likely to have any other maid-servant at present; but Dame Staples will supply the place of one."

In the same letter which expresses lack of confidence in the powers of John Steevens's wife, she writes, —

"I am very fond of experimental housekeeping, such as having an ox-cheek now and then; I shall have one next week, and I mean to have some little dumplings put into it, that I may fancy myself at Godmersham."

In November Cassandra is informed that —

"Our family affairs are rather deranged at present, for Nanny has kept her bed these three or four days, with a pain in her side and fever; and we are forced to have two charwomen, which is not very comfortable. She is considerably better now; but it must still be some time, I suppose, before she is able to do anything. You and Edward will be amused, I think, when you know that Nanny Littlewart dresses my hair."

It was the same hand which so carefully noted for her sister's edification hundreds of details like these that as faithfully recounted the succession of small events which form the background of her own novels. She was abundantly aware that such trivial matters do not make the whole of life; but she understood their bearing upon it, and that the extent of their influence is a variable quantity,

depending on the characters of the individuals affected by them. Her daily routine was such as to show her that little matters of every-day existence were not to be despised, in the fashion of the weavers of sentimental fiction. Her native common-sense would have saved her from sharing in their error even if her insight had not been keen enough to allow her to recognize the subtle effect of every-day incident upon character.

Not unfrequently we find in the correspondence at this time allusions to her personal appearance. "I have made myself two or three caps to wear of evenings since I came home," she remarks in December, 1798, "and they save me a world of torment as to hair-dressing, which at present gives me no trouble beyond washing and brushing, for my long hair is always plaited up out of sight, and my short hair curls well enough to want no papering. I have had it cut lately by Mr. Butler."

Mr. Austen-Leigh observes, in the course of his biography, that the Austen sisters were considered to have adopted the custom of wearing caps much earlier in life than their years or looks required, and from this passage in Jane's letter it would seem that she at least began to do so when not quite twenty-three. Of one thing we may rest assured, that the articles in question were becoming to her, or she never would have worn them. She was very far from being vain, but she did like to look her best, as what sane woman or man does not?

Regarding her caps, she enlarges a fortnight later : —

“ I took the liberty, a few days ago, of asking your black velvet bonnet to lend me its cawl, which it very readily did, and by which I have been enabled to give a considerable improvement of dignity to the cap, which was before too *nidgetty* to please me. I shall wear it on Thursday; ¹ but I hope you will not be offended with me for following your advice as to its ornaments only in part. I still venture to retain the narrow silver round it, put twice round without any bow, and instead of the black military feather shall put in the coquelicot one, as being smarter, and besides, coquelicot is to be all the fashion this winter. After the ball, I shall probably make it entirely black.”

This is Tuesday's intention, but on Wednesday she takes up her letter to add, “ I have changed my mind, and changed the trimmings of my cap this morning,” — a sentence which serves to show how constant was the dependence of the younger sister upon the judgment of the elder.

“ I felt as if I should not prosper if I strayed from your directions; and I think it makes me look more like Lady Conyngham than it did before, which is all that one lives for now. I believe I *shall* make my new gown like my robe; but the back of the latter is all in a piece with the tail, and will seven yards enable me to copy it in that respect?”

¹ On the occasion of a ball at Manydown.

The ball once over, we find her writing of it in thus wise : —

“ There were twenty dances, and I danced them all, and without any fatigue. I was glad to find myself capable of dancing, and with so much satisfaction as I did; from my slender enjoyment of the Ashford balls (as assemblies for dancing), I had not thought myself equal to it, but in cold weather, and with a few couples, I fancy I could just as well dance for a week together as for half an hour. My black cap was openly admired by Mrs. Lefroy, and secretly, I imagine, by everybody else in the room.”

And this woman who would not have minded dancing for a week together is the same personage who has been constantly styled “ prim,” “ demure,” and “ precise.” Surely, if this be primness, what may its antithesis resemble? Did primness ever before condescend to dance twenty dances in one evening even of the statelier measures of our great-grandmothers? It must not be forgotten that she who frankly confesses to so much enjoyment is not a young girl at her first party, but Miss Jane Austen, a young woman of twenty-three, already arrived at the dignity of “ aunt,” the heroine of numberless balls, and the author by this time of three unpublished novels.

Never was the personality of another more amusingly misconceived than Miss Austen's has been by persons to whom her name has been synonymous with what is termed “ old maidishness.”

But I more than suspect that those who bring this awful charge against her have little more knowledge of her than what is comprised in a familiarity with her name and the *titles* of her books. Let us note the preparations of this "demure," sober-minded precisian for another ball, which was to take place early in 1799 :

"I am not to wear my white satin cap to-night, after all ; I am to wear a mamalone cap instead, which Charles Fowle sent to Mary, and which she lends me. It is all the fashion now, — worn at the opera, and by Lady Mildmays at Hackwood balls. I hate describing such things, and I dare say you will be able to guess what it is like. I have got over the dreadful epocha of mantua-making much better than I expected. My gown is made very much like my blue one, which you always told me sat very well, with only these variations: the sleeves are short, the wrap fuller, the apron comes over it, and a band of the same completes the whole."

Of Miss Austen's own share in the festivities of this particular occasion, we hear thus, —

"I do not think I was very much in request. People were rather apt not to ask me till they could not help it ; one's consequence, you know, varies so much at times without any particular reason. There was one gentleman, an officer of the Cheshire, a very good-looking young man, who, I was told, wanted very much to be introduced to me ; but as he did not want it quite enough to take much trouble in effecting it, we never could bring it about.

"I danced with Mr. John Wood again ; twice with

Mr. South, a lad from Winchester, who, I suppose, is as far as possible from being related to the bishop of that diocese as it is possible to be ; with G. Lefroy and J. Harwood, who, I think, takes to me rather more than he used to do. One of my gayest actions was sitting down two dances in preference to having Lord Bolton's eldest son for my partner, who danced too ill to be endured."

Hardly was this ball over before another succeeded it ; and at this one we hear of her having six partners whom she names for Cassandra's edification, styling them "an odd set," and then adds, with a touch of the cheerful philosophy so strongly characteristic of her : "I had a very pleasant evening, however, though you will probably find out that there was no particular reason for it ; but I do not think it worth while to wait for enjoyment until there is some real opportunity for it," — a lesson, by the way, which has never been well conned by the generality of the human race before or since Jane Austen learned it.

The allusions to Jane's brothers are exceedingly numerous in all of her letters, showing how constantly they and their affairs were present to her mind. Their various journeys, their separate family events, their good fortunes, when such befell, — all are noted and dwelt upon in her letters with affectionate interest. And from all that we know of them, and this is not a little all told, they were worthy of the love of two such sisters as Jane and Cassandra Austen, — a love which they repaid

by the utmost consideration and kindness which brotherly affection could suggest and fraternal regard supply.

Sometimes we are treated to a glimpse of them as they appeared to those who admired them, as, for instance, when we are told with sisterly pride that "Charles was very much admired at Kintbury, and Mrs. Lefroy never saw him so much improved in her life, and thinks him handsomer than Henry."

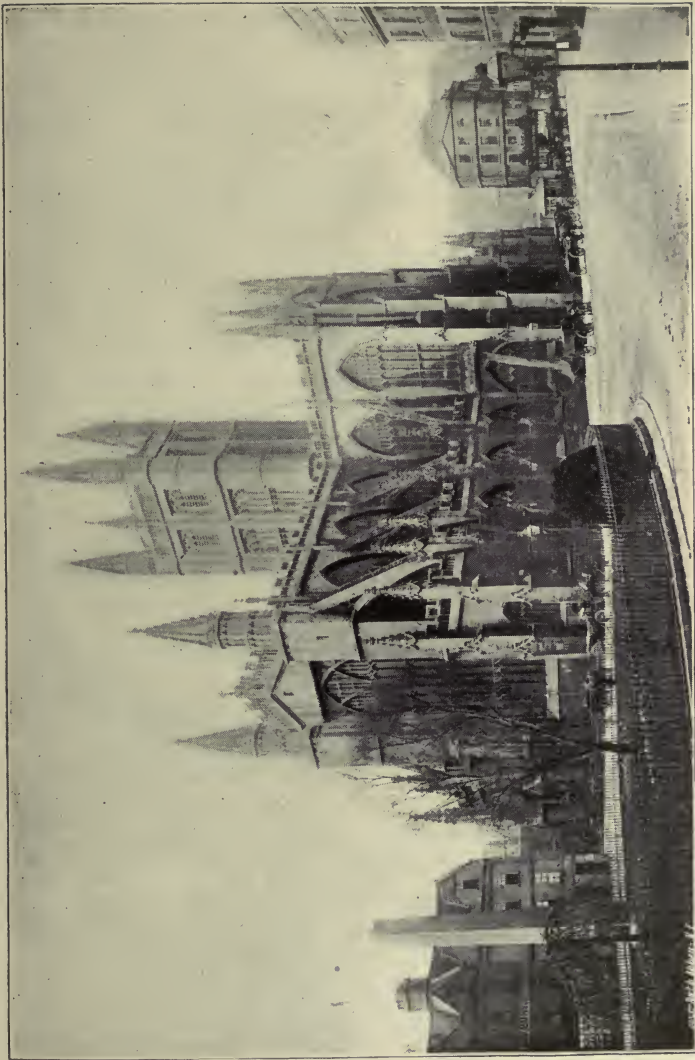
All were inexpressibly dear to Jane, but Charles was probably nearest her heart. "Our own particular little brother," she writes of him at one time. At another we hear that "our dear Charles," then a lieutenant on board the "Scorpion," "begins to feel the dignity of ill usage." Accordingly his father communicates with Admiral Gambier on the subject, and soon thereafter Jane writes joyfully that although continued on the "Scorpion," Charles will soon be promoted; and, to add to her delight, about the time that this hoped-for event takes place, Capt. Francis Austen is raised to the rank of commander, and appointed to the "Petterel," off Gibraltar.

V.

VISIT TO BATH; IN THE BALL-ROOM; LETTER TO MISS LLOYD; REMOVAL TO BATH; "THE WATSONS;" THE AUSTENS AT LYME; THE COBB AT LYME; JANE AUSTEN IN DEVON.

IN May of the year 1799 Edward Austen, who with his wife had taken a house in Bath for a month that he might try the waters there for the benefit of his health, invited his mother and sister Jane to visit him for that period. The invitation was accepted; and while Mrs. Austen and her younger daughter were absent on this occasion, Cassandra remained with her father at Steventon. This was at least Jane's third visit to Bath if we suppose her first one to have been at the time when her portrait was painted. Between these two dates, at the close of 1797, another visit seems to have taken place, the time of which, indeed, is definitely settled by means of a passage in a letter of hers from Bath under date of April 8, 1805, in which she says: "This morning we have been to see Miss Chamberlaine look hot on horseback. Seven years and four months ago we went to the same riding-house to see Miss Lefroy's performance."

In itself the matter is of trifling importance until we assume, as I think we may safely do, that it was



BATH ABBEY FROM THE NORTH - EAST.

at the time of this second visit, of which we know no more than what may be gathered from the above extract, that Jane Austen acquired that intimate knowledge of Bath localities and customs which she turned to such excellent purpose in writing "Northanger Abbey" the next year. The information she might have obtained on her first visit when a girl of fifteen would certainly not have been accurate enough to have served her turn some six or seven years later; and for this reason I think it extremely probable that returning to Steventon and completing "Sense and Sensibility," she set herself at work upon "Northanger Abbey" while her impressions of Bath remained fresh and vivid. Certain it is that she was therefore no stranger to the gay city when she and her mother went there in the spring of 1799.

Her letters describing the events of this latest visit are all dated from their temporary home at 13 Queen Square, then as now an exceedingly pleasant and cheerful locality. The square, which unlike many similarly named enclosures does not belie its name, was designed and built by the noted architect, John Wood the elder, some little time before the middle of the eighteenth century, and consists of handsome stone residences of a uniform height of three stories, with pillared fronts, enclosing a small well-shaded park, in the centre of which is an obelisk commemorating a royal visit to the city in 1738. From the first the square was a fashionable locality much affected by the gayety and

fashion of London sojourning at Bath, nominally for the purpose of "drinking the waters." Although in modern days it has lost a good deal of its original prestige, it yet remains for many purposes a desirable quarter of the town. No. 13, where the Austens were staying, is on the southern side of the square and at the west corner, fronting therefore upon both Queen Square and Princes' Street. The neighborhood seems to have favorably impressed Jane, for she writes to Cassandra :

"I like our situation very much ; . . . and the prospect from the drawing-room window, at which I now write, is rather picturesque, as it commands a prospective view of the left side of Brock Street, broken by three Lombardy poplars in the garden of the last house in Queen's Parade."

The "three Lombardy poplars" have long since vanished from the scene, and just beyond them what was then an open common is now the delightful Royal Victoria Park ; but from where Jane Austen sat to write these lines the eye may still range across the square, past the five or six tall dark-fronted houses of the Queen's Parade to where the houses on "the left side of Brock Street" rise above the luxuriant leafage of the Park.

Her letters at this time from "England's Florence" —

"The lovely city whose grace no grief deflowers" — are fuller chronicles of events than those from Steventon, as they naturally would be ; but she does

not forget among them all to detail in lively fashion such essentially feminine matters as these :

“ My cloak is come home ; I like it very much, and can now exclaim with delight, like J. Bond at hay-harvest, ‘ This is what I have been looking for these three years.’ I saw some gauzes in a shop in Bath Street yesterday at only fourpence a yard, but they were not so good or so pretty as mine. Flowers are very much worn, and fruit is still more the thing. . . . I am quite pleased with Martha and Mrs. Lefroy for wanting the pattern of our caps ; but I am not so well pleased with your giving it to them. Some wish, some prevailing wish, is necessary to the animation of everybody’s mind ; and in gratifying this, you leave them to form some other which will not probably be half so innocent. . . . Though you have given me unlimited powers concerning your sprig, I cannot determine what to do about it, and shall therefore in this and in every other future letter continue to ask your further directions. We have been to the cheap shop, and very cheap we found it, but there are only flowers made there, no fruit ; and as I could get four or five very pretty sprigs of the former for the same money which would procure only one Orleans plum, — in short, could get more for three or four shillings than I could have means of bringing home, — I cannot decide on the fruit till I hear from you again. Besides, I cannot help thinking that it is more natural to have flowers grow out of the head than fruit. What do you think on that subject ? ”

Of their amusements we hear something now and then.

“ There is to be a grand gala on Tuesday evening in Sydney Gardens, — a concert with illuminations and fireworks. To the latter Elizabeth and I look forward

with pleasure; and even the concert will have more than its usual charm for me, as the gardens are large enough for me to get pretty well beyond the reach of its sound."

A fortnight later saw the Austens at another display of fireworks in the same place, when "the fireworks," so she records, "were really very beautiful, and surpassing my expectations."

Ninety years have come and gone since that delightful evening; and still on gala nights the Bathonians stroll out through Pulteney Street to experience a similar pleasure in the same locality. On the ninetieth anniversary of Jane's second evening at Sydney Gardens, a soft, moonless June night, I rambled through the shaded pathways, lit by countless lanterns and still further illumined at intervals by myriads of rockets and candles scattering their colored fires, my thoughts turning with little effort to the brilliant young woman who had found in those same leafy lantern-lit alleys the pleasures of that long-past gala night surpassing her expectations. But for the railway-cutting through the pleasant park, time has not made many important changes there in the course of nine long decades. Many of the trees are yet standing under whose branches she then walked; and it is chiefly the faces and the fashions which one who knew the gardens at the dawn of the century would fail to recognize there now. Time, indeed, has made but little apparent impression upon this city girt round by the fair downs of Somerset. It has added, it is true, a darker shade to the sombre house-fronts;

but it has been impartial, and has tinted the façade of a year with the same deep tone worn by its neighbor of nearly two centuries. Change itself is made to wear the garb of permanence here.

“Age and grey forgetfulness, time that shifts and veers,
Touch not thee, our fairest, whose charm no rival nears.”

But Jane Austen’s knowledge of Bath by this time was not limited to acquaintance with its streets and the people who filled them, but included a pretty thorough familiarity with its suburbs as well. On one occasion she mentions with enjoyment a summer walk near sunset beyond the city streets, —

“Sunset liker sunrise along the shining steep.”

“We took a very charming walk from six to eight up Beacon Hill, and across some fields to the village of Charlecombe, which is sweetly situated in a little green valley, as a village with such a name ought to be. . . . We had a Miss North and a Mr. Gould of our party; the latter walked home with me after tea. He is a very young man, just entered Oxford, wears spectacles, and has heard that ‘Evelina’ was written by Dr. Johnson.”

On a fair June morning of 1889 I climbed the steep streets leading up to Camden Crescent, the Camden Road of Jane’s day and of “*Persuasion*,” and ascending a flight of steps at its farther end, reached the yet steeper path up Beacon Hill, — a toil rewarded most amply by glimpses through

the dense shrubbery crowning the upper hillside of the roofs and towers below me of the —

“City lulled asleep by the chime of passing years.”

The portion of Lansdown still called Beacon Hill is now partially covered with houses ; but these I soon left behind, and passed along a winding road which led away from them down the northeastern slope to where the few houses of Charlecombe are strung like infrequent beads along the curving lane. Here in a pasture sloping up from the roadside is the smallest of churchyards with barely space within for a diminutive church with saddleback tower, both tower and west end almost hidden from sight by the dark branches of a yew that was old in the time of the Conqueror. From this quiet folding of the hills one may see in the distance some of the suburbs of the city so near at hand ; but all is green and fair and sweet on this secluded hill-slope, and the lark's song falling through a thousand feet of air and the voice of the cuckoo telling his name to all the hills were the only sounds I heard. Surely

“Peace hath here found harborage mild as very sleep.”

Nearly a century has passed since that evening walk of which Jane Austen wrote, but nothing of the charm which she found in the lovely valley has vanished with the years ; and as the village looked to her eyes in 1799, so it appeared unchanged to mine so long after.

It is in one of these letters from Bath that we find one of the comparatively few allusions Miss

Austen makes to her own work. Her first book was still known to the family circle as "First Impressions;" and it is to this she alludes in a passage wherein Cassandra is playfully cautioned to withhold the book from their friend, Martha Lloyd, the sister-in-law of James Austen: —

"I would not let Martha read 'First Impressions' again upon any account, and am very glad that I did not leave it in your power. She is very cunning, but I saw through her design: she means to publish it from memory, and one more perusal must enable her to do it."

It clearly appears that by this time the fact of Jane's having written one book or more was no secret among the circle of family connections, as it had never been in the Steventon household itself. She may have shrunk from being known as an author to the world at large, but that the small world composed of her own family and immediate friends should so know her she was not greatly disinclined; and it seems probable that her books in manuscript were circulated to some extent among the friends most nearly associated with her, for their criticisms and suggestions. The advice in such matters of Cassandra and her brothers James and Henry probably had the most weight with her of all that she doubtless received. It is more than ten years later before we meet, with the next reference to her own writing; and then we find her speaking of "Sense and Sensibility," at that time passing through the press in London:

"No, indeed, I am never too busy to think of 'S. and S.' I can no more forget it than a mother can forget her sucking child; and I am much obliged to you for your inquiries. I have had two sheets to correct, but the last only brings us to Willoughby's first appearance. Mrs. K. regrets in the most flattering manner that she must wait *till* May, but I have scarcely a hope of its being out in June. Henry does not neglect it; he *has* hurried the printer, and says he will see him again to-day. It will not stand still during his absence, — it will be sent to Eliza.¹

"The *incomes* remain as they were, but I will get them altered if I can. I am very much gratified by Mrs. K.'s interest in it, and whatever may be the event of it as to my credit with her, sincerely wish her curiosity could be satisfied sooner than is now probable. I think she will like my Elinor, but cannot build on anything else."

In spite of the scanty references which she makes to her books, the nature of such as do occur is of a character to show us that they occupied no insignificant place in her thoughts, though in the period between the two extracts just made, her pen accomplished but little.

After this sojourn in Bath, which ended on June 20, we know nothing definitely of the family history of the Austens for more than a year, or to be exact, not until Oct. 25, 1800; and we may assume that for the greater part of this time the sisters were together, since they seldom left their parents at the same time, one usually re-

¹ The wife of Henry Austen.

maining in charge of the household in the absence of the other. In October of this latter year Cassandra was again at Godmersham visiting Edward Austen and his wife, and the correspondence was resumed. In the letters—at this time are many references to the two sailor brothers, to the various movements of James and Henry, to their neighbors, their own amusements, and to the contemplated removal of the Steventon household to Bath. Cassandra is asked in one place: “Did you think of our ball on Thursday evening, and did you suppose me at it? You might very safely, for there I was;” and out of the ten dances which constituted the employment of this evening of revelry, we are quite prepared to hear that Jane danced nine.

At a ball taking place at Deane a few days later, she was present, with the same capacity for enjoyment, dancing, so she tells us, nine dances out of twelve, and “merely prevented from dancing the rest by the want of a partner.”

Certainly Miss Jane Austen at the age of twenty-five was yet some degrees removed from absolute formality, in spite of the sobering effect of that cap with its coquelicot ribbons. Perhaps it was during the time of those three dances in which she did not engage for want of a partner that she had leisure to observe, for her sister’s amusement, the appearance of some of the “fifty people” who were in the ball-room.

“ There were few beauties ; and such as there were, were not very handsome. Mrs. Iremonger did not look well, and Mrs. Blount was the only one much admired. She appeared exactly as she did in September, with the same broad face, diamond bandeau, white shoes, pink husband, and fat neck. . . . I looked at Sir Thomas Champneys and thought of poor Rosalie ; I looked at his daughter, and thought her a queer animal with a white neck. Mrs. Warren I was constrained to think a very fine young woman, which I much regret. She danced away with great activity. Her husband is ugly enough, uglier even than his cousin John ; but he does not look so *very* old. The Miss Maitlands are both prettyish, very like Anne, with brown skins, large dark eyes, and a great deal of nose. The General has got the gout, and Mrs. Maitland the jaundice. Miss Debary, Susan, and Sally, all in black, but without any statues, made their appearance, and I was as civil to them as circumstances would allow me.”

The incidental allusion to the ball occurring in September, of which we know only what may be inferred from the reference, will perhaps not escape the notice of those who, like the writer, are glad to think that Jane Austen was still happy and buoyant enough to find delight in the amusements and pastimes of the people about her.

There is no trace of ill-nature in these rather vigorously drawn characterizations. Cassandra would not misinterpret them, she was sure ; and as no other eye, so she fancied, would ever rest upon her hasty thumb-nail portraitures, she was at no pains to qualify what she wrote. They are, in fact,

conceived in precisely the same humorous spirit as the following passage from a letter written in the same month, November, 1800, to her friend Martha Lloyd, then living with her mother at Ibthorp, where Jane visited her before the month was ended :

“ You distress me cruelly by your request about books. I cannot think of any to bring with me, nor have I any idea of our wanting them. I come to you to be talked to, not to read or hear reading ; I can do that at home ; and indeed I am now laying in a stock of intelligence to pour out on you as my share of information. I am reading Henry’s ‘ History of England,’¹ which I will repeat to you in any manner you may prefer, either in a loose, desultory, unconnected stream, or dividing my recital as the historian divides it himself, into seven parts. The Civil and Military ; Religion ; Constitution ; Learning and Learned Men ; Arts and Sciences ; Commerce, Coins, and Shipping ; and Manners. So that for every evening in the week there will be a different subject. The Friday’s lot — Commerce, Coins, and Shipping — you will find the least entertaining ; but the next evening’s will make amends. With such a provision on my part, if you will do yours by repeating the French Grammar, and Mrs. Stent² will now and then ejaculate some wonder about the cocks and hens, what can we want ? ”

It is not unlikely that it was during Jane’s short visit to the Lloyds that her father, now

¹ Robert Henry’s “ History of Great Britain on a New Plan ” was a comparatively recent book at the time this letter was written.

² An intensely dull old lady, then a member of the Lloyd household at Ibthorp.

past seventy, suddenly decided to resign the living of Steventon in favor of his son James; for Mr. Austen-Leigh records the fact of Jane's absence from home when this resolve was taken, and adds that as Mr. Austen "was always rapid both in forming his resolutions and in acting on them, she had little time to reconcile herself to the change."

Lord Brabourne, in his edition of the letters of his great-aunt, observes that this removal does not seem to have been so much regretted by her as it might naturally have been when one remembers that Steventon had been her home from the time of her birth till then, and explains this seeming indifference by adding that her home was wherever her own people were. Her nephew, writing fifteen years before, assures us on the contrary that "Jane was exceedingly unhappy" when informed of the contemplated change. Undoubtedly he may, when a boy, have heard something in relation to the subject from his father, who was Jane's eldest brother, and writing half a century later, have recorded what he imperfectly remembered, or perhaps have unconsciously colored his statement with what he fancied that his aunt *ought* to have felt on such an occasion. This supposition seems to me not at all unlikely, for I cannot for a moment believe that a woman of Jane Austen's even temperament would have allowed herself to appear "very unhappy" over what her common-sense must have told her was for the best. That she remained wholly unaffected by the circumstance is of course

impossible ; but if "some natural tears" were shed over the approaching change, she dried them soon, and "unhappy" she certainly never became. The following passage from a letter to Cassandra of Jan. 3, 1801, written after the removal was a settled event of the near future, supports the explanation of Lord Brabourne much better than the assertion of her nephew ; but in justice to the latter, the fact must not be lost sight of that he never saw the letter from which the extract is taken.

"I get more and more reconciled to the idea of our removal. We have lived long enough in this neighborhood. The Basingstoke balls are certainly on the decline ; there is something interesting in the bustle of going away ; and the prospect of spending future summers by the sea or in Wales is very delightful. For a time we shall now possess many of the advantages which I have often thought of with envy in the wives of sailors or soldiers. It must not be generally known, however, that I am not sacrificing a great deal in quitting the country, or I can expect to inspire no tenderness, no interest, in those we leave behind."

The change was indeed for the better, so far at least as Mr. and Mrs. Austen were concerned. In resigning the parish to his son, Mr. Austen could feel that it would be ably cared for by one whose heart was in his work, as his own had been for so long ; and in the city he could surround the last years of his wife and himself with many comforts and enjoyments not possible to obtain in the coun-

try, but to which his long life of useful labor might now fairly entitle him. His daughter could not fail to see this very readily, and without doubt adopted at home the same cheerful, sportive attitude toward the coming event which is manifest in the letter to her sister.

The decision having been irrevocably made by the Austens, there followed a long period of uncertainty in what part of Bath their new home had best be fixed; and Jane's letters are full of references to the difficulty of settling upon a suitable locality. Each of them possessed greater or less familiarity with Bath, and separate likes and dislikes for particular quarters thereof; and this did not tend to simplify their perplexities. Westgate Buildings, in the near vicinity of the baths, was one of the first places they thought of, — the same locality in which Mrs. Smith is represented in "Persuasion" as living, and thereby incurring the fine scorn of Sir Walter Elliot.

Westgate Buildings were among the earliest of the houses erected by Wood the elder in the course of his extensive operations; and as he continued his labors, the tide of fashion gradually ebbed from the streets first built up by him, until by the time "Persuasion" was written, Westgate Buildings had become what it is now, — a very unfashionable region indeed. At the opening of the century, however, it was, if not an extremely desirable location, a perfectly unobjectionable place of residence. Charles Street, for which Jane declared a preference, is a

short distance farther west. Laura Place, an octagonal enlargement of Pulteney Street, east of the Avon, and near which they had some thoughts of establishing themselves, seems to have been considered beyond their means, it being then as now a highly esteemed portion of the city. Gay Street, a handsome avenue leading from Queen Square to the Circus, was likewise thought too expensive a situation for their purse. Exception was however made to "the lower house on the left-hand side as you ascend," for which a smaller rent was asked, and there appears some reason for believing that a few years later they did occupy this house for a short time.¹

Mrs. Austen, Jane writes, at one time fixed her wishes "on the corner house in Chapel Row, which opens into Princes' Street. Her knowledge of it, however, is confined only to the outside." As this place is exactly opposite the side of 13 Queen Square, it is probable that Mrs. Austen had taken a fancy to it when staying at the latter place in 1799. They were not wanting in advisers, who seem to have multiplied rather than divided their perplexities; for Jane observes that her aunt, Mrs. Perrot, "will want to get us into Oxford Buildings, but we all unite in a particular dislike of that part of the town, and therefore hope to escape,"—a hope which, on account of the steepness of the street in the vicinity last mentioned, and the consequent discomfort to elderly people like Mr. and Mrs. Austen, was a very natural one. Against Trim Street, the reputation of

¹ See page 97.

which was not much better in the last century than in this, they appear to have been jestingly warned. All this early in January, 1801, and a fortnight later they are still uncertain as ever where to lay their heads.

“Miss Lyford was very pleasant, and gave my mother such an account of the houses in Westgate Buildings, where Mrs. Lyford lodged four years ago, as made her think of a situation there with great pleasure; but your opposition will be without difficulty decisive, and my father, who was very well inclined towards the Row before, has now ceased to think of it entirely. At present the environs of Laura Place seem to be his choice. His views on the subject are much advanced since I came; he grows quite ambitious, and actually requires now a comfortable and a creditable-looking house.”

It was easy enough for Mr. Austen to make up his mind to exchange Steventon for Bath; but in coming suddenly to this conclusion, he probably had not the faintest notion of the amount of perplexity and indecision into which his resolve was to plunge himself and family for long weeks afterward. It may all seem a trivial matter to those who move yearly and think little about it; but when a household has remained in one place for thirty years, the choosing of another home becomes a subject of the gravest consideration, and this it certainly received in the Austen family.

“I join with you,” writes Jane on January 22, “in wishing for the environs of Laura Place, but do not

venture to expect it. My mother hankers after the Square dreadfully, and it is but natural to suppose that my uncle will take *her* part. It would be very pleasant to be near Sydney Gardens; we might go into the labyrinth every day."

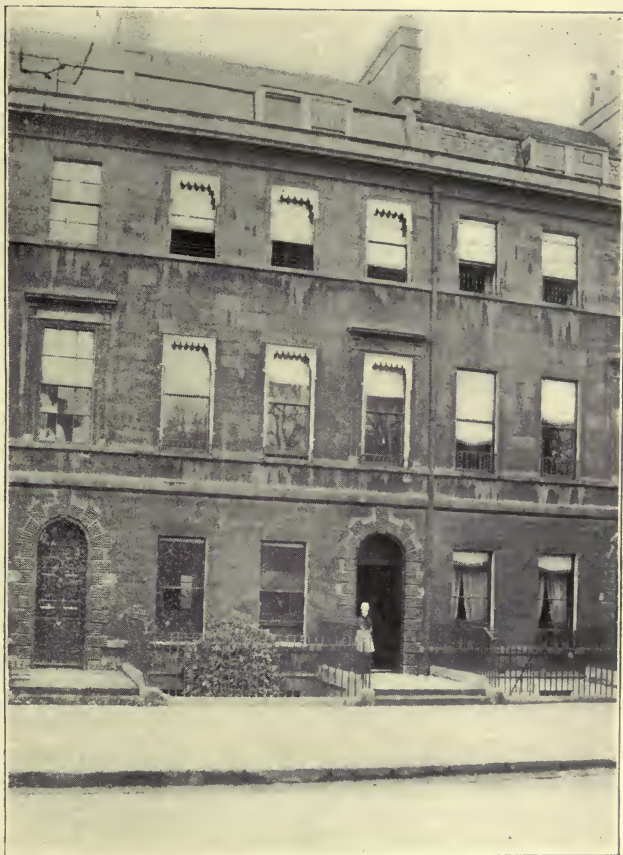
Winter merged itself into spring, and spring became midsummer, before the anxieties of the Austens were at length over. In May, however, the transit from Steventon to Bath was accomplished; and the family remained with their relatives, the Perrots, whose house was in the Paragon, — a long row of tall houses fronting on a steep street in Walcot parish, and affording from their rear windows an extensive view of Hampton Down and the valley of the Avon to Bathampton. House-hunting now began in earnest; and in May Jane writes as follows to Cassandra, then visiting the Lloyds at Up-Hurstborne, a village five miles from Andover, near the line of the two counties of Wilts and Hampshire: "I fancy we are to have a house in Seymour Street,¹ or thereabouts. My uncle and aunt like the situation." A few lines farther on we read that Jane and her uncle, Mr. Perrot, have been to see some house in Green Park Buildings, very near the Seymour Street just mentioned. On May 12 she explores a house in the latter street, and on the 21st they hear such unfavorable accounts of Green Park Buildings that they decide definitely

¹ Seymour Street, which leads south from James Street opposite Charles Street, is a short thoroughfare, one side of which is now occupied by the Midland Railway Station.

against that locality at any rate, and also against some houses close by in New King Street.

In what manner they reached a final decision, or at just what time, there are no records existing to inform us, the last letter of this year being that of May 21; but the absolute necessity of making some choice may have driven them hastily into a decision at the last moment, for they ended by settling in a vicinity not before thought of by them, though nearer Laura Place than any other named in the letters. This was Sydney Place, a handsome range of three-storied houses in Bathwick parish, between the ends of Pulteney and Bathwick streets. These residences faced the Sydney Gardens, so that Jane's desire to be near that pleasure-ground had now its realization. The house in which they lived, and which presents exactly the same appearance as its neighbors, is No. 4, and is the fourth from Pulteney Street. In Mr. Austen-Leigh's memoir the locality is named as *Sydney Terrace*, which is a slight error, for as Mr. Peach, the historian of Bath, has assured me, "there never was a Sydney Terrace at all until some years after Miss Austen's time."

Of the four years spent in Bath by the Austen family we hear from the correspondence of the last one only, and perhaps may conclude, from want of definite information to the contrary, that the sisters were not separated for any long period during these years. How the time was passed by Jane herself must now be fairly clear from what we know of her



NUMBER FOUR, SYDNEY PLACE.

THE AUSTEN HOME AT BATH.

habits and preferences. In such a place and with her frankly admitted liking for society and her enjoyment of it in moderation, it is by no means likely that these were years of seclusion. At the proper seasons there were the Assembly Balls to attend at the Upper and Lower Rooms; and like her own Catherine Morland and Anne Elliot, she must have gone frequently to the Pump Room to meet her acquaintances, and have strolled with them at evening along the Crescent. And there were the much-admired Sydney Gardens in front of her own door!

Her fondness for walking and her keen enjoyment of scenery led her to extend her rambles in the suburbs much farther than she was able to do in the course of her previous visits; and she could now enjoy the felicity of Cassandra's company in these excursions, which supplied the one thing needed to make her perfectly happy in them. Together they must have roamed the downs above Sham Castle or the grounds about Prior Park, which Pope and Fielding had found so charming, and which the latter had long before celebrated in the opening of "Tom Jones." Beechen Cliff they found without doubt as pleasing as did Catherine Morland in the company of Henry Tilney; and Lansdown, on the opposite side of the city, they could not have helped knowing well, perhaps as far northward as the famous Prospect Stile, whence on clear days, beyond the towers of Bristol, one may catch the gleam of the waters of the Bristol Channel.

Indeed, we cannot go far wrong in assuming an intimate acquaintance on Jane's part during these four years with most of the places of interest in and about the city —

“Loved of men, beloved of us, souls that fame inspheres.”

As one wanders through its streets, or surveys it from the green cordon of its hills, it is pleasant to think that one is treading in Jane Austen's footsteps. Not every association which clings to this city “girt about with beauty” is so fragrant as those which connect it with her name; and surely few are better worth the cherishing.

That her pen was not entirely laid aside during these years at Bath the unfinished story which Mr. Austen-Leigh has styled, “The Watsons,” affords testimony, if we agree with him in considering it to be a work of this period. Certainly he would have been quite right in judging from the internal evidence presented by its style that it did not belong to the number of her early sketches and fragmentary tales, even if he had not had the water-marks of the paper on which it is written to assist him toward this conclusion. As these water-marks are dated 1803 and 1804, we are able of course to assert positively that it could not have been written before the years named; but it must remain purely a matter of opinion whether these pages may not have been written either at Southampton or Chawton as well, for the water-mark of 1804 would not disprove the latter assumption. It has unquestiona-

bly a maturity of thought not so distinctly traceable in her first three books, though of course it is wanting in the finish which they as completed and revised works possess ; and who can say that it does not belong to the time when in the quiet cottage at Chawton she began to write again with even more devotion to her task than she showed in the years from 1796 to 1798? Still the classification which places its date somewhere about 1804 is a convenient one ; and if it cannot be conclusively proved can as little be disproved, and therefore for practical purposes may be accepted.

It is not a work which is familiar to most readers, even to those who know the six completed novels intimately, and has not, I think, received quite the attention it deserves. To a generation which is disposed to regard with reverence the half-completed tales, the fragmentary sketches, and even the pencilled memoranda found upon the writing-desks of the great masters of fiction when the chair is forever pushed aside and the pen laid away to be taken up no more, this story, unrevised fragment as it is, but showing on every page whose the practised hand that penned it, should be of especial interest. Not without much truth her nephew says of it : —

“ I think it will be generally admitted that there is much in it which promised well: that some of the characters are drawn with her wonted vigor, and some with a delicate discrimination peculiarly her own; and that it is rich in her especial power of telling the story and

bringing out the characters by conversation rather than by description."

To Cassandra the writer seems to have talked freely of her plans in regard to this story; and when in her old age the surviving sister was showing the manuscript of this tale to some of her nieces, she told them in what manner Jane had intended to complete it, but seems not to have added, what did not occur to them to ask, when it was written.

In September, 1804, Mr. and Mrs. Austen and their daughter Jane spent some weeks in lodgings at Lyme-Regis, on the Dorset coast, but close to the borders of Devon; and it is to the impressions received during this visit that we owe certain memorable scenes in "*Persuasion*." The picturesque little watering-place, of more consequence then than now, when Bournemouth, Boscombe, Torquay, and other towns along the Dorset and Devon shores have risen into notice, seems, with its irregular lines of houses, jostling one another in their efforts to find standing room along the beach at the base of the great Dorset downs, to have greatly delighted Jane Austen. When, in "*Persuasion*," she makes Anne Elliot say of Lyme, "So much novelty and beauty! I have travelled so little that every fresh place must be interesting to me; but there is real beauty at Lyme, and, in short, my impressions of the place are very agreeable," she is declaring her own likings as well as Anne Elliot's.

So strongly indeed was she impressed by the little town and vicinage that the only extended description of scenery she permits herself to give in any of her novels is one of which Lyme and its neighborhood is the subject. Of this particular passage I shall have more to say later ; but I am very sure that any one who has had the happiness of seeing this corner of Dorsetshire will heartily echo Jane Austen's enthusiastic assertion that " a very strange stranger it must be who does not see charms in the immediate environs of Lyme to make him wish to know it better."

The locality of the Austen lodgings Jane omits to mention in her letter to Cassandra, then visiting the Lloyds at Ibthorp ; but we may assume them to have been in the newer and less crowded portion of the town, west of the noisy little river Lyme, and not far from the esplanade. Mr. Austen's advanced years would naturally have made him averse to choosing a house which could be reached only by one of the steep hillside streets for which Lyme is so famous ; and the older streets, east of the Lyme, must have been then as now too redolent of fish to make them altogether desirable for residence. I am inclined therefore to think their home to have been in one of the group of houses between the esplanade and the roadway leading to the Cobb, as the breakwater is locally termed. Nevertheless, wherever situated, their rooms appear to have left something still to be desired, for Jane informs her sister that " nothing can exceed the inconveniences

of the offices except the general dirtiness of the house and furniture and all its inhabitants."

There was much to occupy Jane's time during the sojourn at Lyme, as the observations in her letter of September 14 sufficiently show. Attentions to the comforts of her parents, calls, walks upon the Cobb, and the Thursday balls, — these, with the bathing, must have taken a large share of it, but we know from "Persuasion" that they did not absorb it all. Up-Lyme, Pinney, the pretty, neat village of Charmouth near the mouth of the small river Char, — these she knew well, and must frequently have walked to one or other of them, along roads and paths which offer at almost every step views that are among the most beautiful in England. That these were as generally appreciated in her time as now may fairly be questioned. Ninety or a hundred years ago, the world was only just beginning to see beauty in scenery which had not called in the aid of the landscape gardener to enhance its attractiveness; and what then brought strangers to Lyme was not the charm of its surroundings, but nominally its character as a health resort, and in reality its reputation as a watering-place with some pretensions to be called fashionable. Miss Austen was one of the first to see in Lyme something of interest apart from its two "lions" — the George Inn, where the Duke of Monmouth stayed after his landing here in 1685, and the remarkable stone cobb, or pier — and the visitors themselves. Since her day Lyme-Regis has never wanted for eulogists.



VIEWS AT LYME REGIS.

The Cobb, which is so prominent a feature in "Persuasion," has undergone extensive alterations since that book was written. In 1824 it was so greatly damaged by a severe storm that it was determined by the Board of Ordnance to rebuild and extend it. Accordingly, in April, 1825, under the direction of Lieutenant Fanshawe, of the Royal Engineers, operations were begun upon the Cobb, which were not completed until a year from the following November, when the structure was left in its present substantial, shapely condition. It consists of a broad upper level, with a lower level on the shoreward or harbor side, some ten feet below the other. At present the levels are connected by a double flight of steps near the shoreward end, and two single flights at other points. The central flight, showing from the distance as a dark diagonal line along the side of the wall, consists of rough stones projecting from its face, and is locally known as "the teeth." When the Cobb was rebuilt, a hundred feet, which did not require reconstruction, were left in the same state as before. This portion, which includes "the teeth," was built in 1792, and is called "the new Cobb" in "Persuasion," and is therefore all that is left of the Cobb which Jane Austen knew. Down those steep steps the party in "Persuasion" descended on the memorable occasion when Louisa Musgrove insisted on jumping down them, and fell so tragically at the bottom.

It is related that when Lord Tennyson was

visiting Lyme, his friends there were exceedingly anxious to show him where the Duke of Monmouth landed, which it is extremely doubtful if they could have done, since there is no existing trace of the pier upon which he disembarked. Much to their surprise, the poet exclaimed with considerable indignation, "Don't talk to me of the Duke of Monmouth! Show me the precise spot where Louisa Musgrove fell."

If the Austens visited other places than Lyme in the autumn of 1804, Mr. Austen-Leigh's memoir makes no mention of the fact; and as the Brabourne edition of the Austen letters contains none of this year, we have no further authentic account of their movements at this time. A writer in "Temple Bar" for 1879 asserts, however, that either just before or just after their stay at Lyme, they passed some time at Teignmouth, lodging in a house said to be still standing, and called by the same name as then, — "Great Bella Vista," — but gives no authority for the statement. Teignmouth, as no tourist in Devon needs to be informed, is a fashionable resort on the Devonshire coast, sixteen miles south of Exeter; and that Jane Austen may have visited it is not at all unlikely, for she was by no means unfamiliar with localities in Devon. Barton Cottage, the home of the Dashwoods, in "Sense and Sensibility," is mentioned as only four miles north of Exeter; and the scenery in its neighborhood is described with too much exactness to lead us to believe it entirely imaginary. Dawlish, named

in the same work, is but three miles from Teignmouth; and the presumption in my mind is that either in this year or in some other of the family residence in Bath, she spent enough time in Devonshire for her to acquire a pretty intimate knowledge of its localities, — information which she afterward used in preparing "Sense and Sensibility" for the press, and in writing "Persuasion." This may not improbably have been in 1802; for in one of her letters of 1814 she refers to her acquaintance with Dawlish twelve years previously. Unfortunately, the letters for this period which would settle this and many other points in her history are no longer in existence.

How long Miss Austen remained in Lyme is not known, nor if this were her only visit; but whether the possible trip to Teignmouth took place before or afterward, one thing is certain, that in the late autumn the Austens were again in Bath, and the family life was resumed at Sydney Place. So far as is known, this was the last time the Reverend George Austen was ever to leave home until the time when he should go out from its doors to return no more. But how shortly this was to be the Austens could not know.

VI.

DEATH OF JANE'S FATHER; LODGINGS IN BATH; JANE AUSTEN IN SOCIETY; VISITS IN KENT.

IN Mr. Austen-Leigh's memoir of his aunt he makes mention that his grandfather, the Reverend George Austen, died in Bath in February, 1805, and that he was buried in Walcot Church in that city. Lord Brabourne, chronicling the same fact in the introduction to his edition of the Austen letters, simply says that the death occurred early in 1805. Hoping to ascertain the exact date of the event, if possible, I went one morning, in June of 1889, to the mother church of Walcot parish, St. Swithin's, and among the hundreds of tablets which almost entirely cover the walls of the interior, looked in vain for one to commemorate the virtues of the rector of Steventon. The verger, amazed that I passed by the monuments to Anstey and Madame d'Arblay with a hasty glance, assured me that there was no such tablet in the church as the one I was seeking, and in deprecatory excuse of the seeming neglect on the part of the Austen family to provide such a memorial, added that "literary people did n't often have much money to spend in that way."

Whether Jane Austen and her family were withheld from recording their father's merits in marble in this place by any such reasons as this may be questioned ; but certain it is that St. Swithin's Church, the place of his burial, contains no other memorial of him than a brief entry in the burial register of the parish for 1805. This record includes merely the date, Jan. 26, 1805, and the number of the vault where the interment was made.

It may seem not a little singular that there should be no other remembrance of him here beyond this faded leaf in a time-worn parish register seldom seen by any but the verger and some infrequent visitor like myself ; but doubtless there were good and sufficient reasons why no stone to his memory was added to the many mural tablets which the church contains. It was not because he was not affectionately remembered, we may be very sure.

But, some one may urge, if he were thus remembered, why are no allusions made to him in the letters of his daughter after his death? And in regard to this query, it must be admitted that the only possible reference to him in Jane's letters subsequently to this period, occurs in one of April 8, 1805, where, speaking of the expected death of their friend, Mrs. Lloyd, she says, " May her end be as peaceful and easy as the one we have witnessed ! " And yet it would not be fair to accuse her of indifference because of her apparent silence

in reference to this great family sorrow ; for all our existing knowledge of the Austen family is against such an assumption. It must be borne in mind that from May 21, 1801, to August 24, 1805, we have no letters of hers save one written from Lyme the September before Mr. Austen's death, and two others from Bath in the April which followed it. Because in these two letters, out of others which may have been written, her father is not mentioned except inferentially, there is hardly warrant for the belief that he was not mourned. Far from it. We must believe from what we know of her nature that she felt his loss as sincerely as any one could do ; but her sunny temperament probably preserved her from continually dwelling upon it. Cassandra Austen, who knew intimately every thought almost of her sister's heart, most assuredly did not convict her of want of feeling. Their common loss was a common sorrow, too closely shared to need the relief of many words.

Soon after Mr. Austen's death, the family removed from Sydney Place to Gay Street ; but as to the exact locality of their new residence there exists some difference of opinion. Mr. Peach, in his "Historic Houses of Bath," expressly declares that the Austens removed from Sydney Place to No. 1 Gay Street ; while Mr. Wodehouse, M. P. for Bath, in a published address upon Miss Austen's life and works, gives the number as 25, and Lord Brabourne merely says that the family removed to Gay Street. Jane Austen's letter of

April 8, 1805, quoted in her nephew's memoir, is dated from No. 25 Gay Street; but on April 21 she heads her letter with "Gay Street" simply.

No. 1 Gay Street is no longer in existence. It was a fine house with a side entrance under a handsome porch, and a few years ago was pulled down in order to widen the approach to the Victoria Park. The street has not been renumbered, so that at present there is no No. 1. Mr. Peach is very firm in his belief that the Austens lodged here, although the reasons for his faith do not seem to me altogether clear. Those who prefer to think of Jane Austen as at No. 25 have at least the satisfaction of knowing that that house still exists.

But whichever locality be the correct one, the Austen residence in this street was not of long duration, for in the late spring or early summer of 1805 Mrs. Austen and her daughters removed to No. 27, Green Park Buildings,¹—a pleasant locality not far from Gay Street, and very near the present Midland Railway Station. The opposite sides of a small triangular park, which is open at its base or southern side, are here built up with rows of handsome stone houses the windows of which command cheerful views in several directions, the green background of Beechen Cliff to the south being an especially prominent feature in the prospect.

But the Austens' life at Bath was now drawing to a close; and before the end of 1805 the family was

¹ Now Green Park.

established at Southampton. That the four years of Jane's residence in Bath were much enjoyed by her is unquestionable. It is, however, a generally received opinion that she cared nothing for society, and seldom mingled in it; but this, like many other opinions hastily accepted without inquiry, is an erroneous one. For the frivolous, empty tide of London fashion which flowed through Bath in certain seasons, carrying with it to the provincial city the polished vices as well as the glittering follies of the metropolis, she certainly did not care. That society knew her not. Nor was she known to the literary men and women of the day who might now and then be seen in the Pump Room in the company of the other notables of the time. Nothing of hers had yet been published; for although Bull, a publisher in Old Bond Street, had purchased in 1802 the manuscript of "Northanger Abbey" for the sum of ten pounds, it was lying untouched, and possibly unread, among his papers at the epoch of her leaving Bath. Such slight encouragement as this had not tempted her to consider herself a literary personage; and she accordingly made no effort to know personally the men and women whose books she knew, and whose faces must some of them have been familiar to her among the people she saw at the Pump Room or in the streets.

But because Miss Austen mingled neither in the literary society of the day nor in the ranks of the ultra-fashionable, it must not be supposed that she



THE INTERIOR OF THE PUMP ROOM, BATH.

1875



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dwelt in hermit-like seclusion these four years. The preceding pages will have been written in vain if they have not shown that she found pleasure in the usual pursuits of society, — its visits, its balls and parties, and, in short, its entire round of engagements. Her handsome face and winsome manners brought her much attention wherever she went ; and her wit and vivacity made her conversation eagerly listened to. She was not in the least deceived as to the nature of the admiration she received, for she could very clearly discern the boundary line between flattery and sincerity ; but she could not help knowing that she was attractive, and she took an honest pleasure in the fact. Gay society did not make for her the whole of life, but it added to it a great deal that was congenial to her. Before she came to live in Bath, she had gone much into social life in the neighborhood of Steventon and Winchester, had danced at more than one ball in Kent, and was no stranger to the Bath Assembly Rooms ; but continued residence in the latter city offered her increased advantages, which there is every reason to suppose that she improved. Although it has suited the fancy of many persons, three quarters of a century after her death, to label her “the prim Miss Austen,” we may be very positive that the lively young people of her own circle, the many young men she danced with, or the many girls she sat and talked with so gayly never applied such an adjective to her.

The close of 1804 brought with it the first great sorrow of her life, — the loss of her friend, Mrs. Lefroy of Ashe, who was killed by a fall from her horse on Jane's twenty-ninth birthday (December 16). Though a number of years the elder of the two, Mrs. Lefroy was, next to Cassandra, Jane's closest friend. There were, in fact, many points of resemblance between the two in character as well as in person; and the fondness Mrs. Lefroy had shown for Jane as a child had ripened into the deepest affection for her as a woman. Like Jane, she was very attractive in appearance; and her eager enthusiasm found its counterpart in the younger woman's fresh delight in new scenes and new people. Her death could not fail to make a deep and lasting impression upon Jane, who, four years later, wrote a poem of some length in memory of her friend. Of this poem it is quite enough to say that while in every way commendable as to sentiment, its merit as verse is not great enough to make us wish that she had devoted more time to metrical studies.

A few weeks after Mrs. Lefroy's death occurred that of Mr. Austen, as we have already noted; and these two great sorrows coming so closely upon one another may have made Jane not averse to leaving Bath altogether, when such a change was decided upon. But before the change of residence to Southampton was made, Mrs. Austen and her daughters paid a visit to their relatives in Kent. The sisters were not, however, together at this time,

for on the 24th of August, 1805, Jane, who was then staying at Godmersham Park, some six or seven miles south of Canterbury, takes occasion to write to Cassandra, then a guest at Goodnestone¹ Farm, between Canterbury and Deal. In this letter we get incidentally a glimpse of the gentle, obliging disposition which made "Aunt Jane" so popular among her nephews and nieces:—

"Yesterday was a very quiet day with us; my noisiest efforts were writing to Frank and playing at battledore and shuttlecock with William. He and I have practised together two mornings, and improve a little; we have frequently kept it up *three* times, and once or twice *six*."

It is an attractive picture which this extract summons up before us. One can very readily see the animated, handsome woman whose nearly thirty years did not oppress her with a weight of dignity so great as to prevent her enjoyment of a childrens' game, and who was always ready to leave her own employment in order to please an importunate small nephew by joining him in his.

A day or two later the sisters changed places, meeting in Canterbury *en route*, — Jane being now at Goodnestone and Cassandra at Godmersham. These visits in Kent were events of much importance to them both, and considering the inconveniences of travelling in those days, were of

¹ There is another Goodnestone in Kent, near Faversham, and about eight miles west of Canterbury.

frequent occurrence. Goodnestone was the home of their relatives, the Bridges; and Godmersham, as we are already aware, was the residence of their brother Edward. Both are in the immediate neighborhood of Canterbury, which city became almost if not quite as well known to Jane Austen as Winchester, though perhaps not having quite as high a place in her affections, and certainly less definitely associated with her in our minds. The country around the city of Saint Augustine is most truly —

“A land of hops and poppy-mingled corn;”

and through it all there wind in countless placid curves the clear waters of the Stour flowing northward through the gap in the low chalk downs at Wye to join the sea beyond the Sandwich bars. Interminable hop-fields spread themselves over the low-lying Kentish lands; red-coned hop-kilns perk up their inquiring heads in every quarter; and here and there windmills wave white, awkward arms beseechingly.

Fifteen miles south of Canterbury is the town of Ashford, above whose clustered roofs rises the great tower of the ancient church dedicated to Saint Mary. It is now a place of much importance as a railway centre; but a century ago it was a nucleus of social life for eastern Kent, and the Ashford balls were frequently attended by the Austen sisters in the course of their Kentish visits. If one follows the Stour four or five miles northward from the stone bridge at Ashford, one finds upon

its banks at the foot of Wye Down the village of Wye, but little larger now than when the Austens knew it. Not far from the railway station can be seen the low square tower of St. Lawrence's Church at Godmersham, and near at hand the woods and pleasure-grounds of Godmersham Park, shut off from the roadway by a high wall. Chalk downs slope upward to the west beyond Godmersham House; and through the eastern portion of the park runs the Stour. Chilham Park and Castle to the north, and Eastwell Park to the south, both of them frequently visited by Cassandra and Jane, are neither of them far distant or much beyond the limits of an easy walk; and following up the windings of the Stour beyond the downs of Chartham, one sees the vast grey bulk of the cathedral lifting itself above the many crowding red roofs of Canterbury. It is a fair country. Certainly there is no lovelier region in eastern Kent than the valley of the Stour, which in the course of her repeated visits became as familiar to Jane Austen as were "England's Florence" beside the Avon, the long roll of the Hampshire downs, or the level meads of the Itchen from Winchester to Southampton.

The life in Kent was at all seasons one many times removed from dulness or monotony; and the sisters never seem to have wanted for abundant occupation in the course of their visits. The large households at Godmersham and Goodnestone presented many absorbing interests; and there were

countless excursions to Canterbury and Ashford, varied by brief visits among the neighboring gentry. It is on Jane's return from one of these during this summer that she writes thus : —

“ Our visit to Eastwell was very agreeable ; I found Ly. Gordon's manners as pleasing as they had been described, and saw nothing to dislike in Sir Janison, excepting once or twice a sort of sneer at Mrs. Anne Finch.”

During this month of August an important topic in Kent seems to have been a prospective grand ball at Deal, which the Austens, being in mourning, of course did not expect to attend, but which they evidently could not help hearing much of. Jane, who was still at Goodnestone with the Bridges, succeeded in persuading her friend Harriet Bridges to accept an invitation to the ball, which was to take place on the Friday of her own return to Godmersham. The Hattons, from Eastwell were to take Miss Bridges ; but Jane appears to have feared that this part of the plan might fail, for she tells Cassandra, —

“ I am anxious on the subject, from the fear of being in the way if they do not come to give Harriot¹ a conveyance. I proposed and pressed being sent home on Thursday to prevent the possibility of being in the wrong place, but Harriot would not hear of it.”

As it happened, the news of the death of the Duke of Gloucester, brother to George the Third,

¹ It must be admitted that my beloved great-aunt was a careless speller. — LORD BRABOURNE.

was received before the letter was completed ; and the public mourning for that event of course put an end to the expected festivities at Deal. Still the account of the preparations for the ball is not without an interest for us, in the additional evidence it affords of the unselfish disposition of Jane Austen, and her willingness to put aside all considerations of a personal nature whenever the convenience or happiness of another was concerned.

VII.

REMOVAL TO SOUTHAMPTON; LIFE AND SOCIETY THERE; VISIT IN KENT.

IN Lord Brabourne's pleasant, gossipy introduction to the published letters of his illustrious great-aunt, after mentioning the removal of the Austens from Bath, he observes, "I do not know why the family chose Southampton as their next residence;" and Mr. Austen-Leigh, recording the same event, makes no comment whatever on any supposed reasons for the change. As there are no existing letters or family records dating from this period, we can account for the Austens' choice only inferentially; but some little knowledge of the Southampton of a century ago, as compared with the busy seaport of to-day, will perhaps aid us slightly in the matter.

It was not far from the year 1750 that Southampton came into notice as a watering-place, with fashionable lodging-houses and a well-defined "season." In 1767 the Public Assembly Rooms on the West Quay were built, and a Master of Ceremonies held sway in the ball-room, of late years used as a drill-hall, and now fast falling into decay. What Brighton was to be soon after was faintly

shadowed forth in the Southampton of the early years of the reign of George the Good ; but the exclusively fashionable people were not suffered to have things all their own way. It began to be discovered that the small provincial borough possessed unmistakable advantages as a health resort ; and at the close of the eighteenth century its relation to the rest of England was not very different from that held now by such places as Torquay and Bournemouth on the southern coast, and Ventnor and Bonchurch on the Isle of Wight. But it was not for long that it held this place. In 1803 an Act of Parliament was passed for making docks and extending the quays at Southampton. In 1820 the first steamer made her way along Southampton Water and the Solent ; and Southampton the watering-place ceased to be, while Southampton the thriving seaport began existence in its stead.

At the time, however, when Mrs. Austen and her daughters left Bath, Southampton was a quiet seaside watering-place much affected by those in search of health, but becoming each year less and less the resort of fashionable idlers. We know that the state of Mrs. Austen's health had often been a source of anxiety to her children ; and it seems to me exceedingly probable that the beneficial climate of Southampton was not without influence in the family considerations, and that the place was selected for their residence very largely on their mother's account.

Then, too, they were quite as likely to meet with congenial people here as at Bath ; and furthermore, their new location was a very convenient one in some respects, as it brought them nearer to their Kentish relatives, while it did not remove them from the circle of their Hampshire friends. Perhaps also the near vicinity of Portsmouth was reckoned by them as an advantage, since whenever the naval members of the family were ordered to report at Portsmouth, it was very easy for the sons to visit their mother, who was so close at hand ; and as it happened, for a portion of the Austens' residence in Southampton Capt. Francis Austen and his wife made part of the family.

At what time in the autumn the move was made is not known ; but before the close of 1805 it had been a feat some time since accomplished. Their new home is thus described by Mr. Austen-Leigh : —

“ My grandmother's house had a pleasant garden, bounded on one side by the old city walls ; the top of this was sufficiently wide to afford a pleasant walk with an extensive view, easily accessible by steps.”

Of this garden we hear something more in Jane's letters, for on Feb. 8, 1807, she writes to her sister that —

“ Our garden is putting in order by a man who bears a remarkably good character, has a very fine complexion, and asks something less than the first. The shrubs which border the gravel walk, he says, are

only sweetbrier and roses, the latter of an indifferent sort; we mean to get a few of a better kind, therefore, and at my own particular desire he procures us some syringas. I could not do without a syringa, for the sake of Cowper's line. We talk also of a laburnum. The border under the terrace wall is clearing away to receive currants and gooseberry bushes; and a spot is found very proper for raspberries."

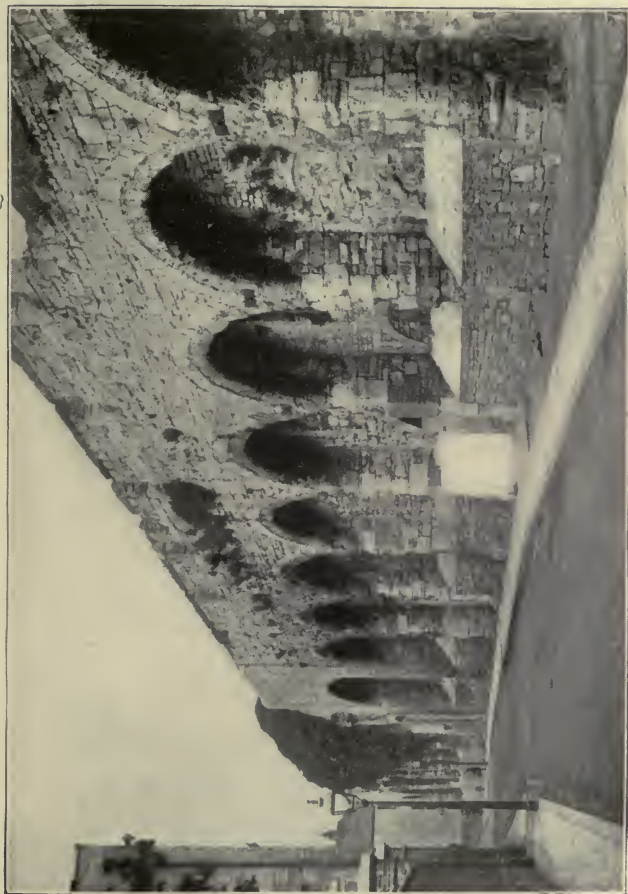
The "pleasant garden" of Mr. Austen-Leigh's recollections, which his aunt heard called "the best in town," has long had existence in memory only; and where it once was is a spot now so squalid and forlorn that it is difficult to realize that it was ever anything else. Little but the name is left of the Castle Square which was the abode of the Austens for four years. Leading from the western side of the broad High Street, close to and below the ancient and massive Bar Gate spanning the roadway with its Norman arches, is the narrow alley called Castle Lane, which furnishes the most direct approach to the square from the east; and along this the Austens must have passed daily. A fragment of the old wall of the castle, closely hemmed in by other structures, may still be seen on the upper side of the lane, which is but a short one, ending in a small triangular plot of open ground, dusty and turfless, and wholly within the horse-shoe curve described by the castle walls, and originally the base court of the castle. Several streets lead from this square, one to the south ascending a small rise of ground and terminating

after a short curve at the door of a large stone building now called Zion Hall, and used as a Salvation Army hall. On this spot once stood the singular castellated house of the Marquis of Lansdowne, the most pretentious dwelling in that neighborhood. It was taken down about the year 1810; and its absence makes it difficult to imagine, as Mr. Austen-Leigh remarks, how so large a building as it evidently was could have stood in so contracted a space. The ground it occupied was once some ten or twelve feet higher, and formed a mound crowned by the castle keep in the days when Henry the Fifth embarked at Southampton for the invasion of France.

What must have been a very familiar sight in Jane Austen's daily life at Castle Square is thus narrated by her nephew:—

“The Marchioness had a light phaeton, drawn by six, and sometimes by eight, little ponies, each pair decreasing in size, and becoming lighter in color through all the grades of dark brown, light brown, bay, and chestnut, as it was placed farther away from the carriage. The two leading pairs were managed by two boyish postilions; the two pairs nearest to the carriage were driven in hand. It was a delight to me to look down from the window and see this fairy equipage put together; for the premises of the castle were so contracted that the whole process went on in the little space that remained of the open square.”

Westward of Castle Square and close at hand is the battlemented line of the city walls with a road-



ANCIENT WALL OF SOUTHAMPTON.

way along the parapet ; and from here a flight of forty steps leads down to a broad modern esplanade at the waterside. Below the square to the south-west, approached by a narrow squalid street, and facing the West Quay, is a long stretch of the city wall, with a fine Edwardian arcade along its front. Opposite this at one point is the time-worn wooden structure before mentioned, the fashionable Assembly Room in the middle and later Georgian period.

The neighborhood of Castle Square is not an agreeable one in our day, and must have steadily deteriorated for decade after decade till it became what it is now, — one of the city slums. No trace here remains of the Austen house, which, judging from Mr. Austen Leigh's account, must have been situated on the west side of the square, with its garden extending to the base of the battlemented wall already mentioned. All of the houses in the square present a mean and dingy appearance, and none of them would seem to be much over fifty years old ; and certainly none of them were in existence in the Austens' time. Yet in spite of all the changes the lapse of years has made, one feature of the Castle Square of eighty years ago remains practically the same as then, the one, too, which must have been most dearly prized by the sisters, — the fair prospect the situation offers.

Stand for a while on the parapet to which the Austen garden once reached. Below the walls to westward are the waters of the Test, no longer a

pretty, swiftly flowing trout stream, as at Stockbridge, miles away in North Hants, but an estuary a mile or two in breadth, and rapidly widening southward into Southampton Water. Across its rippling surface is seen the waving bosage of the great New Forest in full view. Along the Test the many sails show white as the wings of the screaming gulls that fly above it. Perhaps it is toward evening; and the broad Test burns in the glow of the sun, that is poised just above the New Forest trees, behind which it glides a few moments later; or it is early morning, and the walls of the castle throw long dark wavering shadows halfway across the river, but beyond these shadows the sails redden, and the skies above the New Forest glow with a pale reflex of the eastern light. Or it may be that a low-lying fog cuts off from view the farther shore; or the Test is ruffled by flaws or passing showers, or foam-crested in the face of a western gale; or the full tide, "glazed with muffled moonlight," covers all the sands, and swings in long slow undulations from the castle walls to the New Forest shores. Just such scenes as these one may see from time to time from the old base court of the castle; and just such sights Jane Austen saw from her garden in the same base court more than a lifetime ago. It grows very easy to comprehend her liking for Southampton when one has such views before him, and remembers the lovely old-time garden from which they could once have been witnessed.

How readily the family adjusted themselves to

their new residence, and how the change was at first enjoyed by them all, we know nothing definitely, since there is no correspondence existing for the year 1806, and the memoir has nothing to add in regard to it. Indeed, from the 30th of August, 1805, there is a break in the correspondence until Jan. 7, 1807; and at this time, when we regain certain intelligence of the family movements, Cassandra is visiting at Godmersham, while Jane is keeping house for her mother and entertaining her brother James and his wife, who had come from Steventon for a short visit. Besides Mrs. George Austen and Jane, the family circle now comprised Capt. Francis Austen and his wife, and Miss Martha Lloyd, the sister-in-law of James Austen. To a certain extent the cares of the household were shared by Miss Lloyd and Mrs. Francis Austen; but the practical direction of it all must have been the province of Jane when her elder sister was from home. Housekeeping does not seem to have been particularly liked by her, perhaps from the conscientious fear that she was not competent to fill her sister's place, or the thought that she was not doing enough for the comfort of those for whom she was caring. Such an inference as this last at any rate may be drawn, I think, from such passages as the following in the first letter of 1807:—

“When you receive this, our guests will be gone or going; and I shall be left to the comfortable disposal of my time, to ease of mind from the torments of

rice puddings and apple dumplings, and probably to regret that I did not take more pains to please them all.

"Captain Foote dined with us on Friday, and I fear will not soon venture again; for the strength of our dinner was a boiled leg of mutton, underdone even for James, and Captain Foote has a particular dislike to underdone mutton; but he was so good-humored and pleasant that I did not much mind his being starved."

We hear much of Francis Austen in the three letters written during the winter of 1807.

"Frank's going into Kent," his sister writes in February, "depends, of course, upon his being unemployed; but as the First Lord, after promising Lord Moira that Captain A. should have the first good frigate that was vacant, has since given away two or three fine ones, he has no particular reason to expect an appointment now."

A line or two farther on we hear that "Frank has got a very bad cough for an Austen; but it does not disable him from making very nice fringe for the drawing-room window-curtains."

A trifling item enough, but one which shows the future admiral's aversion to anything like idleness, — an aversion shared by his brothers and sisters also. That Jane was not the only member of the family who relied upon Cassandra's judgment is shown in the following allusion to Captain Austen and his wife: —

"Frank and Mary cannot at all approve of your not being at home in time to help them in their finishing purchases, and desire me to say that if you are not, they will be as spiteful as possible, and choose every-

thing in the style most likely to vex you, — knives that will not cut, glasses that will not hold, a sofa without a seat, and a bookcase without shelves.”

The Austens appear to have had by this time many acquaintances in Southampton, and by no means to have wanted for society, feeling obliged to decline, in fact, a number of proffered civilities. In this connection Jane writes at the opening of 1807, —

“Our acquaintance increase too fast. He [Frank] was recognized lately by Admiral Bertie; and a few days since arrived the Admiral and his daughter Catherine to wait upon us. There was nothing to like or dislike in either. To the Berties are to be added the Lances, with whose cards we have been endowed, and whose visit Frank and I returned yesterday. They live about a mile and three quarters from S., to the right of the new road to Portsmouth; and I believe their house is one of those which are to be seen almost anywhere among the woods on the other side of the Itchen. It is a handsome building, stands high, and in a very beautiful situation. We found only Mrs. Lance at home, and whether she boasts any offspring beside a grand pianoforte did not appear. She was civil and chatty enough, and offered to introduce us to some acquaintance in Southampton, which we gratefully declined. ➤

“I suppose they must be acting by the orders of Mr. Lance of Netherton in this civility, as there seems no other reason for their coming near us. They will not come often, I dare say. They live in a handsome style, and are rich, and she seemed to like to be rich; and we gave her to understand that we were far from being so. She will soon feel, therefore, that we are not worth her acquaintance.”

In the quiet passing notice of the rich woman who "seemed to like to be rich," it is easy to recognize the same hand which gave us so many briefly comprehensive characterizations in the pages of "Emma" and "Mansfield Park."

In the letters of this winter are a number of allusions to books of the day, — references which are not without interest for the light they throw upon Miss Austen's preferences in such matters : —

"'Alphonsine' did not do. We were disgusted in twenty pages, as, independent of a bad translation, it has indelicacies which disgrace a pen hitherto so pure; and we changed it for the 'Female Quixote,'¹ which now makes our evening amusement to me a very high one, as I find the work quite equal to what I remembered it. Mrs. F. A., to whom it is quite new, enjoys it as much as one could wish; the other Mary,² I believe, has little pleasure from that or any other book.

"We are reading 'Clarentine,'³ and are surprised to find how foolish it is. I remember liking it much less on a second reading than at the first; and it does not bear a third at all. It is full of unnatural conduct and forced difficulties, without striking merit of any kind.

"I recommend Mrs. Grant's letters as a present. What they are about, and how many volumes they form, I do not know, having never heard of them but

¹ "The Female Quixote," a novel by Charlotte Lennox. was first published in 1752.

² The wife of James Austen.

³ A novel by Sarah Harriet Burney, half-sister to Madame d'Arbly, published in 1796.

from Miss Irvine, who speaks of them as a new and highly admired work, and as one which has pleased her highly. I have inquired for the book here, but find it quite unknown."

The book herein referred to is without doubt "Letters from the Mountains," by Mrs. Anne Grant of Laggan, which was published in 1806, and enjoyed a considerable share of popularity for a time, though at present she is best remembered by a subsequent work, "Memoirs of an American Lady."

In the second of the letters written during this winter, mention is made of a young girl who spent an afternoon at the Austens', and with whom Jane seems to have been much pleased.

"The morning was so wet that I was afraid we should not be able to see our little visitor, but Frank, who alone could go to church, called for her after service; and she is now talking away at my side, and examining the treasures of my writing-desk drawers, — very happy, I believe; not at all shy, of course. . . . What is become of all the shyness in the world? Moral as well as natural diseases disappear in the progress of time; and new ones take their place. Shyness and the sweating sickness have given way to confidence and paralytic complaints. . . . *Evening.* — Our little visitor has just left us, and left us highly pleased with her, she is a nice, natural, open-hearted, affectionate girl, with all the ready civility which one sees in the best children in the present day; so unlike anything that I was myself at her age that I am often all astonishment and shame."

Popular as Jane Austen always was with those of her own age, she was even enthusiastically admired by children; and in many little ways she unconsciously betrays the secret of their fondness for her. For the time being she made their interests hers, and treated them with the same gentle consideration she accorded their elders. She does not appear to have ever been so occupied as to find their presence an annoyance, or ever to have fancied it undignified to join them in their amusements or to provide them with diversions when their own resources failed. Part of this came no doubt from her own strong natural love for children; but still more, I think, proceeded from an intuitive perception of each child's individuality, which enabled her to adapt herself to their varying natures and thus win their hearts by respecting their separate personalities. She allowed them to see that their pursuits were not looked upon by her as in any sense trifling; and in return they gave her an unstinted affection. The wide circle of nephews and nieces always found in "Aunt Jane" a ready sharer in all their joys and sorrows; and the other children whom she knew experienced from her much of the same appreciative kindness.

In June of 1808, Jane, in company with the Steventon Austens (her brother James, his wife, and two children), paid one of her many visits to Godmersham, while Cassandra remained at Southampton; and the four letters which tell all that we definitely know of this summer in her life were written from

Godmersham in this month. The characteristic family affection existing between the various Austens is more than usually observable in those letters. On their way to Kent the party had stopped in London to visit Henry Austen, who had not been well ; and Cassandra is now informed of his improved health. Francis was at this time on board the " St. Albans," anchored near the end of June off the Kentish coast ; and we hear that Henry meditates a trip from London in order to see his brother Frank, in which case Jane hopes for a peep at him in Godmersham. The two oldest brothers, James and Edward, appear to be nearly inseparable during this visit. At one time they go together for a day at Sandling Park, then, as now, the home of the Deedes family, and at that period much admired for the beauty of its mansion, built a few years before ; at another they are setting off for Canterbury together ; while their walks in each other's company about Godmersham are very many. The writer's own greeting from her brother's family is dwelt upon with unmistakable delight : —

" Elizabeth,¹ who was dressing when we arrived, came to me for a minute, attended by Marianne, Charles, and Louisa, and, you will not doubt, gave me a very affectionate welcome. That I had received such from Edward also I need not mention ; but I do, you see, because it is a pleasure."

Reading this last line, one is irresistibly reminded of George Eliot's pathetic confession in one of her

¹ The wife of Edward Austen.

letters, "I like not only to be loved, but to be told that I am loved."

Something of the same desire for expressions of tenderness was a part of the nature of this other woman, who differed in so many ways from the great novelist of our time, but who could not forbear telling of the affectionate welcome from her brother "because it was a pleasure." They loved one another very dearly, these brothers and sisters, and they were not ashamed to own the fact.

It must have been a lively, joyous family party at Godmersham in that far-off June. The two brothers, as we know, were constantly in each other's society; their wives and Jane were equally happy in their own; while the ten children of Edward, or such a proportion of them as had escaped the tyranny of long clothes, were, it is safe to say, delighted with the visit of Edward and Caroline, the children of their uncle James. Fanny, the oldest of the Godmersham children, was now a girl of fifteen. She was then, and always remained, a favorite with her aunt Jane, who tells Cassandra in the first letter that their niece "is grown both in height and size since last year, but not immoderately, looks very well, and seems as to conduct and manner just what she was and what one would wish her to continue."

It was to this niece that Cassandra Austen bequeathed her sister Jane's letters at the time of her death in 1845. The niece was then Lady Knatchbull, the mother of Lord Brabourne, whose fairy

tales have delighted a whole generation of young readers. She survived till 1882, and soon after that date the letters left her by her aunt Cassandra were given to the world by Lord Brabourne.

“Little Edward,” who was one of Jane’s favorite nephews, and the eldest son of her brother James, was now a lad of ten. From his relatives, the Leigh Perrots, he inherited the estate of Scarlets in Berkshire in maturer life, at which epoch he added the name of Leigh to his own. At past seventy, when he had been the Reverend Austen-Leigh for many years, he published the first extended life of his gifted aunt which had ever appeared. This was in 1869; and his death occurred five years after, in 1874. One of his sons, Augustus Austen-Leigh, is the present Provost of King’s College, Cambridge.

A photograph before me of the Reverend Mr. Austen-Leigh, in which may be traced considerable resemblance to the Austens, represents him as a benignant, kindly old gentleman of sixty or more years. There are many references to him in the chronicle of this visit. “His uncle Edward talks nonsense to him delightfully, more than he can always understand,” Jane writes in one place; and the last letter closes with the item, “Little Edward is quite well again.”

But these were not the only two young members of the household who occupied their aunt Jane’s thoughts; allusions to the more juvenile ones are frequent, and, to one who does not

follow closely the details of the family history, somewhat confusing ; and even Aunt Cassandra, one would think, must sometimes have been at fault to establish the identity of every child mentioned, when the number was so large and the names not always dissimilar. But the loving Aunt Jane had no such difficulty ; and all the references were probably clearer than it might now seem to the only individual she ever expected to read her letters.

In the midst of the numberless bits of family details, all of which she knew would be of as much interest to her sister and mother as to herself, we come suddenly upon a passing reference to the chief literary event of 1808, — the appearance of "Marmion," a poem which at the time Jane wrote had been out but four months. She does not seem to have been so much impressed by the book as many of her contemporaries, and was not wanting in the courage of her opinions : "Ought I to be very much pleased with 'Marmion' ? As yet I am not. James reads it aloud in the evening, — the short evening, beginning at about ten and broken by supper."

As it turned out, however, she came to like the work better ere the end of the book was reached.

In the last letter we find her expressing some wonder that her brother Frank's wife, then visiting on the Isle of Wight, did not show as much enthusiastic impatience over her husband's return in the "St. Albans" as the affectionate sister naturally looked for : "When are calculations ever right ?

I could have sworn that Mary must have heard of the 'St. Alban's' return, and would have been wild to come home or to be doing something. Nobody ever feels or acts, suffers or enjoys, as one expects," — a discovery which the author of "Pride and Prejudice" has not remained singular in making.

The happy Godmersham visit drew to its close early in July. It was already planned that Jane should return to Southampton on the 8th; and in a postscript, added on July 1, to her letter of the day before, we find her saying, —

"In another week I shall be at home; and there my having been at Godmersham will seem like a dream, as my visit at Brompton seems already.

"The orange wine will want our care soon. But in the mean time, for elegance and ease and luxury, the Hattons and Milles dine here to-day, and I shall eat ice and drink French wine, and be above vulgar economy. Luckily the pleasures of friendship, of unreserved conversation, of similarity of taste and opinions, will make good amends for orange wine."

There is one other allusion to the Brompton visit, but no clew is given as to the time it was made; but it probably took place just previously to the Godmersham visit, as we know that Jane was in London on June 4, and arrived at her brother Edward's on the 14th, so that between these two dates there was sufficient opportunity for its occurrence. The Brompton meant is in all likelihood the London suburb, and not the portion of Chatham in Kent which goes by that name.

A short distance from Castle Square on the west side of the High Street at the corner of East Street is the Church of All Saints, a Grecian-fronted edifice with Ionic columns, which replaced, in 1792, an old Norman church originally called All-Hallows. Of this church the Reverend Dr. Mant was rector from 1793 to 1817; and during the time the Austens resided in Southampton they were his parishioners. The church is rather closer to Castle Square than that of St. Lawrence, and considerably nearer than either the ancient Holy Rood Church, or the still more venerable temple dedicated to Saint Michael, and was probably chosen as their parish church on account of its convenient location, since Mrs. Austen could more frequently attend it than any other. Its appearance has changed very little since Jane Austen attended service there; but the interest attaching to it in the eyes of the visitor can be little other than the fact that it was the church at which she worshipped, since, unlike St. Michael's, it has no antiquarian or architectural features to detain one. The church of her choice during her life in Bath is not known; but that All-Saints was the one she frequented in Southampton may be considered as conclusively established, and it is to this church and its rector that allusion is made a few pages farther on.

July and August of 1808 we may suppose the sisters to have passed in each other's company at Southampton; but in September Cassandra was

again in Godmersham, and the correspondence was taken up once more. As usual, the absent sister is kept informed of the small events which went to make up the daily round of life at the Southampton home, — matters which Cassandra could doubtless have pretty accurately surmised for herself, but which she always found of absorbing interest when related in the younger sister's sprightly, gossipy style. How well the elder Miss Austen could parallel from her own recollections some such bit as this from Jane's letter of October 1, as she smiled over the merry nonsense at its close! —

“Our party at Mrs. Duer's produced the novelties of two old Mrs. Pollens and Mrs. Heywood, with whom my mother made a quadrille table; and of Mrs. Maitland and Caroline, and Mr. Booth without his sisters, at commerce. I have got a husband for each of the Miss Maitlands. Colonel Powlett and his brother have taken Argyle's inner house; and the consequence is so natural that I have no ingenuity in planning it. If the brother should luckily be a little sillier than the Colonel, what a treasure for Eliza!”

One of their evenings at home is described as follows: —

“About an hour and a half after your toils on Wednesday ended, ours began. At seven o'clock, Mrs. Harrison, her two daughters, and two visitors, with Mr. Debary and his eldest sister, walked in.

“A second pool of commerce, and all the longer by the addition of the two girls, who, during the first, had one corner of the table and spillikins to themselves,

was the ruin of us ; it completed the prosperity of Mr. Debary, however, for he won them both.

“ Mr Harrison came late and sat by the fire, for which I envied him, as we had our usual luck of having a very cold evening. It rained when our company came, but was dry again before they left us.

“ The Miss Ballards are said to be remarkably well-informed ; their manners are unaffected and pleasing ; but they do not talk quite freely enough to be agreeable, nor can I discover any right they had by taste or feeling to go their late tour.”

Alas ! the Miss Ballards have had many successors in tourists of a later day, whose tastes and feelings are far from commensurate with the multitude of advantages afforded for their cultivation.

It would appear that about this time Mrs. George Austen had entertained some thoughts of leaving Southampton, for Jane writes that her mother was really expecting to move to Alton in East Hants, as the rent of their present house was becoming somewhat of a burden upon her income. “ Mrs. Lyell’s hundred and thirty guineas’ rent have made a great impression,” Jane observes in regard to her mother’s state of mind. Before the end of September, however, Mrs. Austen had begun to fancy it would be an excellent solution of her perplexities if she should remove to Wye in Kent, and thus be near to her son Edward at Godmersham. The sudden death of her daughter-in-law, the mistress of Godmersham, which occurred early in October, changed her plans very materially. Mr. Edward Austen after this event was desirous that his mother

should be comfortably settled on one or the other of his estates, either in Kent or Hampshire, and accordingly offered her the choice of a home in either locality, — an offer which perhaps he could not conveniently make before, or which his recent sorrow made him realize the need of making. She selected Chawton Cottage on the Hampshire property, probably, as Lord Brabourne suggests, on account of her lifelong associations with that shire ; and thenceforth the family arrangements at Southampton were all made with reference to Chawton as their future home.

The affliction which had befallen her brother was keenly felt by Jane, who had a strong regard for her sister-in-law ; and her letters at this time are full of the sad event : —

“ That you are for ever in our thoughts you will not doubt. I see your mournful party in my mind’s eye under every varying circumstance of the day ; and in the evening especially, figure to myself its sad gloom : the efforts to talk, the frequent summons to melancholy orders and cares, and poor Edward, restless in misery, going from one room to another and perhaps not seldom upstairs, to see all that remains of his Elizabeth. Dearest Fanny must now look upon herself as his prime source of comfort, his dearest friend ; as the being who is gradually to supply to him, to the extent that is possible, what he has lost.”

The hope expressed in the last sentence met with ample fulfilment ; and Lord Brabourne writes that “ from that moment my mother took charge

of the family, watched over her brothers and sisters, was her father's right hand and mainstay, and proved herself as admirable in that position as afterwards in her married life."

It was of this same niece, who, at fifteen, took up so bravely the burden which had been her mother's, no light yoke to bear in a house where ten children had to be taken care of, that her aunt Jane had written a few days before the bereavement :

" I am greatly pleased with your account of Fanny ; I found her in the summer just what you describe,—almost another sister, — and could not have supposed that a niece would ever have been so much to me. She is quite after one's own heart ; give her my best love, and tell her that I always think of her with pleasure."

The tender heart that felt so deeply for her brother in his great sorrow could not fail to go out in sympathy toward the little ones in their grief : " Your account of Lizzy is very interesting. Poor child ! One must hope the impression *will* be strong ; and yet one's heart aches for a dejected mind of eight years old."

Two of Edward's sons were at Winchester College at this time, and being excused from school duties on account of their affliction, spent a few days at their grandmother's in Southampton. Their aunt Jane seems to have devoted herself to their entertainment and to have done all in her power to lighten the weight of their common sorrow. She tells Cassandra, —

“ *They behave extremely* well in every respect, showing quite as much feeling as one wishes to see, and on every occasion speaking of their father with the liveliest affection. His letter was read over by each of them yesterday, and with many tears. George sobbed aloud ; Edward’s tears do not flow so easily. . . . George is almost a new acquaintance to me ; and I find him in a different way as *engaging as Edward*.

“ We do not want amusement : bilbocatch, at which George is indefatigable, spillikins, paper ships, riddles, conundrums, and cards, with watching the flow and ebb of the river, and now and then a stroll out, keep us well employed. . . . I hope your sorrowing party were at church yesterday, and have no longer *that* to dread. . . . *I went with my two nephews ; and I saw Edward was much affected by the sermon, which, indeed, I could have supposed purposely addressed to the afflicted, if the text had not naturally come in the course of Dr. Mant’s observations on the Litany. ‘ All that are in danger, necessity, or tribulation,’ was the subject of it* The weather did not allow us afterwards to get farther than the quay, where George was very happy as long as we could stay, flying about from one side to the other, and skipping on board a collier immediately

“ In the evening we had the Psalms and Lessons, and a sermon at home, to which they were very attentive ; but you will not expect to hear that they did not return to conundrums the moment it *was over*. . . .

“ While I write now, George is most industriously making and naming paper ships, at which he afterwards shoots with horse-chestnuts, brought from Steventon on purpose ; and Edward, equally intent over the ‘ Lake of Killarney,’ twisting himself about in one of the great chairs. . . . *Tuesday. — We had a*

little water party yesterday: I and my two nephews went from the Itchen Ferry up to Northam,¹ where we landed, looked into the 74, and walked home; and it was so much enjoyed that I had intended to take them to Netley² to-day. The tide is just right for our going immediately after moonshine; but I am afraid there will be rain. If we cannot get so far, however, we may perhaps go round from the ferry to the quay.

"I had not proposed doing more than cross the Itchen yesterday; but it proved so pleasant, and so much to the satisfaction of all, that when we reached the middle of the stream, we agreed to be rowed up the river. Both the boys rowed great part of the way; and their questions and remarks, as well as their enjoyment, were very amusing. George's enquiries were endless; and his eagerness in everything reminds me often of *his uncle Henry*.

"Our evening was equally agreeable in its way: I introduced *speculation*, and it was so much approved that we hardly knew how to leave off."

I think there are few episodes in Jane Austen's life over which it is pleasanter to linger in thought than this, in which we see her giving up day after day to the diversion of these two bright boys to whom their first great sorrow had come so early. True enough, she enjoyed their company and loved to have them with her; but it is not to be supposed that she had no other cares to occupy her at this time. Nevertheless, her other duties seem to have been quietly laid aside just then in the face of the

¹ One of the suburbs of Southampton.

² Netley Abbey is distant from Southampton between two and three miles eastward.

one she regarded as the most imperative. I like to summon up before me the pretty picture the little company must have made rowing up the peaceful Itchen, — not the busy stream it is now, with steam ferry-bridges constantly plying between the city and its growing suburb of Woolston, but a quiet stretch of water vexed only by the ferry, which was a thousand years old in their day, and by the pleasure-boats belonging to the wealthy owners of the villas on its eastern side. One may be very sure that the two boys found an excellent comrade in their handsome aunt, — one who would hear all their questions in smiling patience, praise their skill in rowing, and perhaps now and then take an oar herself when they urged her to do so.

The older of the lads survived his aunt for more than sixty years; and the younger, who is described by Lord Brabourne as “one of those men who are clever enough to do almost anything, but live to their lives’ end very comfortably doing nothing,” outlived her by half a century. Her observation that he reminded her of his uncle Henry shows something of her penetration in regard to character, for Henry Austen, who was most undeniably clever, perhaps in some respects the most brilliant member of his family, can hardly be said to have accomplished much more in his own long life than to have lived comfortably and enjoyed himself. Till middle life he was always full of eager interest in plans which ultimately proved abortive; and the same enthusiasm which at last

faded into complacent acceptance of life's easier conditions found its subsequent counterpart in his nephew, whose "enquiries were endless," but who in all his life, according to Lord Brabourne, "did nothing worthy of mention." One thing at least Jane Austen's early death secured her from, — the pain of seeing this beloved nephew, "ittle Dordy," as she sometimes styles him, renew the disappointment she must have continually felt, though it but seldom found utterance, in regard to her brother Henry.

As winter drew near, a visit from Henry Austen was looked forward to by the Southampton family; and Jane writes, —

"*Our* brother we may perhaps see in the course of a few days; and we mean to take the opportunity of his help to go one night to the play. Martha¹ ought to see the inside of the theatre once while she lives in Southampton; and I think she will hardly wish to take a second view."

From this we may infer that the presentation of the drama in Southampton eighty or ninety years ago left much to be desired. In a letter of December this same year, we find Jane expressing much pleasure in the possession of a new pair of bracelets; and following this are several passages so strongly characteristic of the writer in her gayest mood that I make no apology for transcribing them almost entire.

¹ Martha Lloyd, afterward the second wife of Francis Austen.

“ Soon after I had closed my last letter to you, we were visited by Mrs. Dickens and her sister-in-law, Mrs. Bertie, the wife of a lately made admiral Mrs. F. A.,¹ I believe, was their first object, but they put up with us very kindly. . . . Mrs. D. seems a really agreeable woman; that is, her manners are gentle, and she knows a great many of our connections in West Kent. Mrs. Bertie lives in the Polygon, and was out when we returned her visit, which are *her* two virtues.

“ A larger circle of acquaintance and an increase of amusement is quite in character with our approaching removal. Yes, I mean to go to as many balls as possible, that I may have a good bargain. Everybody is very much concerned at our going away; and everybody is acquainted with Chawton, and speaks of it as a remarkably pretty village; and everybody knows the house we describe, but nobody fixes on the right.

“ I am very much obliged to Mrs. Knight for such a proof of the interest she takes in me; and she may depend on it that I *will* marry Mr. Papillon, whatever may be his reluctance or my own. I owe her much more than such a trifling sacrifice.

“ Our ball was rather more amusing than I expected. Martha liked it very much; and I did not gape till the last quarter of an hour. It was past nine before we were sent for, and not twelve when we returned. The room was tolerably full; and there were perhaps thirty couple of dancers. The melancholy part was to see so many dozen young women standing by without partners, and each of them with two ugly naked shoulders.

“ It was the same room in which we danced fifteen

¹ Mrs. Francis Austen, who had just left Southampton with her husband.

years ago. I thought it all over, and in spite of the shame of being so much older, felt with thankfulness that I was quite as happy now as then. We paid an additional shilling for our tea, which we took as we chose in an adjoining and very comfortable room.

“There were only four dances, and it went to my heart that the Miss Lances (one of them, too, named Emma) should have partners only for two. You will not expect to hear that *I* was asked to dance; but I was — by the gentleman we met *that Sunday* with Captain d’Auvergne. We have always kept up a bowing acquaintance since; and being pleased with his black eyes, I spoke to him at the ball, which brought on me this civility; but I do not know his name, and he seems so little at home in the English language that I believe his black eyes may be the best of him.”

At the close of 1808 James Austen, who had now been rector of Steventon for nearly eight years, received a very acceptable addition to his stipend in the gift of £100 a year from his uncle and aunt at Bath, — Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Perrot; and this event, like every other piece of good fortune which befell her five brothers, gave Jane great pleasure.

“We have now pretty well ascertained James’s income to be eleven hundred pounds, curate paid, which makes us very happy, — the ascertainment as well as the income.”

In the last letter of 1808 mention is incidentally made of an elderly spinster of uncertain temper, whose company was in general very little desired, but whose friendlessness excited a sincere touch of

sympathy in the cheerful happy woman whose society no one could have too much of.

“Our evening party on Thursday produced nothing more remarkable than Miss Murden's coming too, though she had declined it absolutely in the morning, and sitting very ungracious and very silent with us from seven o'clock till half after eleven.”

This is written on Tuesday, but on Wednesday we hear that —

“Miss Murden was quite a different creature this last evening from what she had been before, owing to her having with Martha's help found a situation in the morning, which bids very fair for comfort. When she leaves Steventon, she comes to board and lodge with Mrs. Hookey, the chemist, — for there is no Mr Hookey. I cannot say that I am in any hurry for the conclusion of her present visit, but I was truly glad to see her comfortable in mind and spirits; at her age perhaps one may be as friendless oneself, and in similar circumstances quite as captious.”

It was characteristic of Jane Austen to be able to perceive that people often become disagreeable from causes to a great extent beyond their control; and she judged human failings accordingly. It was this spirit of gentle tolerance which once made her say of a very tiresome old lady of her acquaintance, —

“Poor Mrs. Stent! it has been her lot to be always in the way; but we must be merciful, for perhaps in time we may come to be Mrs. Stents ourselves, unequal to anything and unwelcome to everybody ”

There are fewer references at this period to Charles Austen, who was then at Bermuda, than usual in her correspondence; but there is one which is worth quotation for its affectionate sisterly extravagance of phrase, —

“I must write to Charles next week. You may guess in what extravagant terms Earle Harwood speaks of him. He is looked up to by everybody in all America.”

As the weeks go on, the preparations and plans for the new home in Chawton find an important place in Jane's communications, as, for instance: —

“Yes, yes, we *will* have a pianoforte, as good a one as can be got for thirty guineas; and I will practise country-dances, that we may have some amusement for our nephews and nieces when we have the pleasure of their company.”

What wonder that such an aunt was popular with nieces and nephews! At Chawton House I saw in the summer of 1889 a volume of dance music in manuscript, the careful handiwork of the two sisters; so we may believe that Jane's kindly intentions were carried into effect, and indeed Mr. Austen-Leigh makes mention that at Chawton she practised daily, and usually before breakfast.

In the midst of her last winter at Southampton, busied with household cares and social engagements not a few, she still had time to keep up at least a partial acquaintance with the literature of the day, for we find her writing thus of one of Lady Morgan's

early books, "Woman; or, *Ida of Athens*," which was published at the beginning of 1809.

"To set against your new novel, of which nobody ever heard before, and perhaps never may again, we have got '*Ida of Athens*,' by Miss Owenson, which must be very clever, because it was written, as the authoress says, in three months. We have only read the preface yet; but her '*Irish Girl*'¹ does not make me expect much. If the warmth of her language could affect the body, it might be worth reading in this weather."

Who now has leisure to read Lady Morgan's novels, composed in three months? When one recalls the many months of patient writing and revision which went to the making of any one of Jane Austen's finished sketches, we can well believe that she distrusted the hasty methods of her contemporary, who though seven years her junior was already the author of as many books as the Hampshire novelist produced in her whole life. To a more famous book which was published at about the same time as "*Ida of Athens*" she also refers in one of this winter's letters: —

"You have by no means raised my curiosity after '*Caleb*.' My disinclination for it before was affected, but now it is real. I do not like the evangelicals. Of course I shall be delighted when I read it, like other people; but till I do, I dislike it."

¹ "*The Wild Irish Girl*," by Lady Morgan, was published in 1801.

This is said on the 23d of January ; and on the 30th she again makes mention of Mrs. Hannah More's *chef d'œuvre* : —

“ I am not at all ashamed about the name of the novel, having been guilty of no insult towards your handwriting. The diphthong I always saw ; but knowing how fond you were of adding a vowel wherever you could, I attributed it to that alone, and the knowledge of the truth does the book no service. The only merit it could have was in the name of ‘ Caleb,’ which has an honest, unpretending sound ; but in ‘ Cœlebs ’ there is pedantry and affectation. Is it written only to classical scholars ? ”

There is another playful arrow aimed at Cassandra's spelling in one of these January letters ; but it must be confessed that Jane's own spelling was not wholly above reproach. “ Niece ” is invariably spelled “ neice ” in her correspondence ; “ Harriet ” appears as “ Harriot ; ” and similar misplacements and substitutions are common in her manuscript. Accuracy in spelling seems to be one of the virtues much more strenuously insisted upon by the present generation than by the members of the one which included its great-grandparents. In an age which may almost be said to have cultivated individuality in regard to orthography, the humor presumably concealed in eccentric sequence of letters would have fallen most lamentably flat.

“ You used me scandalously by not mentioning Edward Cooper's sermons. I tell you everything ; and it is unknown what mysteries you conceal from

me; and, to add to the rest, you persevere in giving a final *e* to 'invalid,' thereby putting it out of one's power to suppose Mrs. E. Leigh, even for a moment, a veteran soldier."

As in the novels so in the letters there are but few allusions to contemporary events in the European world; yet they are not entirely wanting. For instance, we have the death of Sir John Moore twice referred to:—

"This is grievous news from Spain. It is well that Dr. Moore was spared the knowledge of such a son's death."

This is on January 24, and in the next letter she adds, —

"I am sorry to find that Sir J. Moore has a mother living; but though a very heroic son, he might not be a very necessary one to her happiness. . . . I wish Sir John had united something of the Christian with the hero in his death."

Because there is so little reference in her novels and letters to the historical events of her generation, Miss Austen has more than once been reproached with indifference. The most momentous events were taking place in Europe during her lifetime, yet save for less than half a dozen brief allusions, occurring incidentally in her novels, and one or two in her correspondence, like the one just quoted, we should not know from either novels or letters that this was the epoch of the first Napoleon, that her countrymen were dying by

thousands in the trenches during the Peninsular War, or fighting with unexampled heroism on the field of Waterloo. Was this indifference on her part? Not wholly that, it seems to me.

That her novels should present almost no reflections of the stirring close of the eighteenth century, and the equally tumultuous dawning of the nineteenth, need not surprise one. The unexpressed principle upon which she acted in literary composition was to write of nothing concerning which she had not personal knowledge; and naturally this limited very materially the size of her canvases, excluding altogether the scenes in political or literary life of which she knew nothing.

I confess that I have more difficulty in accounting for the omission from her correspondence of all mention of what was passing in the world at large. From her two brothers in the navy she must have learned much of the nature and extent of naval movements at that time; and we know that in their absence she kept herself informed of the position of the squadrons of which their vessels formed parts. But her other brothers appear not to have concerned themselves very greatly with matters outside the daily current of their lives; and their attitude no doubt affected Jane's to a great extent. One was a country clergyman, with a multitude of small parish cares absorbing his time and thoughts; another a country gentleman whose hours were mainly devoted to the management of

two large estates, a hundred miles apart ; while the third was a man too full of his own multifarious schemes, and numberless attentions to the pleasure of his many relatives, to have much room for thought of other things. Like her brothers, Jane was a person of restricted sympathies. Her feelings in regard to the men and women she knew were both active and kindly ; but the circumstances of her life were not such as to broaden the field of her sympathies, and to this must be attributed her lack of interest in the great world of affairs. It must be kept well in mind also that her correspondence which has been preserved, is but a small portion of the whole ; and that for several periods of two or three years, or even longer, we have not a line of her writing to guide us to a knowledge of her thoughts and feelings. Had we more letters or a correspondence addressed to more than one person, — for that is the practical limitation of what we do possess, — we might discover in her a wider range of sensibilities than is now apparent. Her position in regard to the larger aspects of her time was, let us believe, not so much one of indifference as that necessarily assumed by one who from lack of knowledge underrated the importance of their bearing upon the century in which she lived.

At the close of the Austen residence in the base court of Southampton Castle, Jane had reached the age of thirty-four ; but she enjoyed an occa-

sional ball nearly as much as when still on the sunny side of twenty, and of the last one she attended in Southampton we are told that she could have stayed longer but for the arrival of her list shoes to take her home. We can well believe that on this occasion she did not want for partners, or if this could possibly have been, that any lack of attendants would have ruffled the surface of her perpetual good-nature.

One more pleasant reference to the favorite niece, Fanny, which occurs in the latest letter of this winter, must close our account of the Southampton life, which had been in the main a very satisfactory one, but which the family were now quite willing to exchange for the home awaiting them at Chawton.

“I am gratified by her having pleasure in what I write; but I wish the knowledge of my being exposed to her discerning criticism may not hurt my style by inducing too great a solicitude. I begin already to weigh my words and sentences more than I did, and am looking about for a sentiment, an illustration, or a metaphor in every corner of the room. Could my ideas flow as fast as the rain in the store-closet it would be charming.”

She had just been writing of her niece that while the young girl continued to give happiness to those about her, she would be pretty sure of her own share.

Consciously or unconsciously, Jane Austen's life was tuned to this same key; and her private hap-

piness was always assured, because it came to her in the ordinary course of an existence which gave delight to every one within its range. All happiness is sweet ; but unsought happiness is sweetest, and this higher joy was always hers.

NOTE TO SECOND EDITION.

The Very Reverend G. W. Kitchin, Dean of Winchester, in a letter to the author, observes in regard to Miss Austen's spelling : —

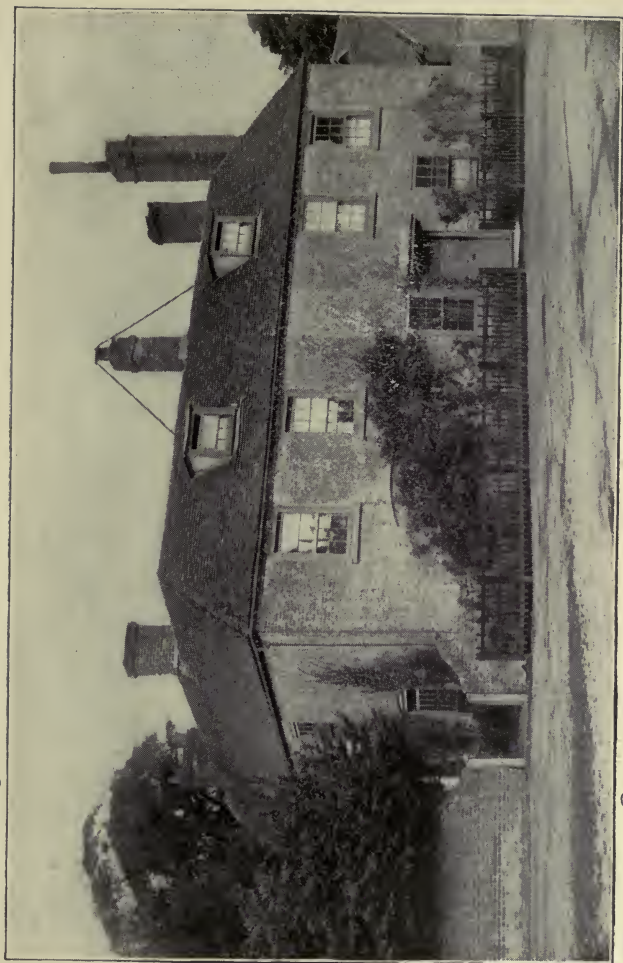
“ By the way, don't cite *Harriot* against people as a miss-spelling. It was the fashionable way of both spelling and pronouncing the name (formerly far more fashionable than now) in the eighteenth century. It was not the thing to sound the two *r*'s, and the *a* was made very broad.”

VIII.

REMOVAL TO CHAWTON ; PUBLICATION OF "SENSE AND SENSIBILITY," "PRIDE AND PREJUDICE," AND "MANSFIELD PARK."

I N December of 1808 Jane had written to her sister that they hoped or wanted "to be settled in Chawton in time for Henry to come to us for some shooting in October at least, or a little earlier ; and Edward may visit us after taking his boys back to Winchester,"—adding, "Suppose we name the 4th of September." This arrangement probably underwent some modification, for a fortnight later they seem to have definitely decided to leave Southampton on Easter Monday, April 3, and after visiting at Godmersham to go directly to their new home. With what degree of precision this plan was carried out we are left in uncertainty, since there are no letters existing from Jane to her sister between the end of January, 1809, and the middle of April, 1811. That the removal was accomplished, however, in the late spring or early summer of 1809, we may safely take for granted ; for with everything in readiness at Chawton, there remained no reason to delay leaving Southampton.

The house at Chawton, which was to be their home for the rest of their lives, had originally



3 CHAWTON COTTAGE FROM THE ROAD.

been an inn, or posting-house ; and for this purpose was well adapted by its situation, being so near the high-road that the front door opened directly upon it. Several additions which Mr. Edward Austen made to the building at this time gave the exterior more the air of a private dwelling ; while extensive alterations inside increased its capacity for comfort. It stood very near the entrance to Chawton Park, and was the last house in Chawton village on the right-hand side of the road from Alton, a mile to the eastward ; just in front was a fork in the road, — the Winchester highway turning to the right, and that to Gosport to the left. According to Mr. Austen-Leigh's description, —

“ A good-sized entrance and two sitting-rooms made the length of the house, all intended originally to look upon the road ; but the large drawing-room window was blocked up and turned into a bookcase, and another opened at the side, which gave to view only turf and trees, as a high wooden fence and hornbeam hedge shut out the Winchester road, which skirted the whole length of the little domain. Trees were planted each side to form a shrubbery walk, carried round the enclosure. . . . There was a pleasant irregular mixture of hedgerow and gravel walk and orchard and long grass for mowing, arising from two or three little enclosures having been thrown together. The house itself was quite as good as the generality of parsonage-houses then were, and much in the same style, and was capable of receiving other members of the family as well as frequent visitors.”

In Lord Brabourne's interesting account of the cottage as it appeared in 1884, he mentions the bricked-up drawing-room window, but appears to think that the change here indicated had been accomplished since the time of the Austens; for he goes on to observe that he believes this was "the window of the drawing-room of the house when Jane's family lived there." The matter is not one of importance, but it may be noted that the closing of this opening would insure a greater degree of privacy to the occupants of the house; and as Mr. Austen-Leigh was in his boyhood and during the lifetime of his aunt Jane a frequent visitor at his grandmother's, his account is doubtless the more accurate one in this particular.

The present condition of the cottage¹ is well shown in photographs taken for the author in September, 1889, by the courtesy of the present owner of Chawton Park, — Montagu Knight, Esquire, a grandnephew of Jane Austen. The house is fairly commodious and quite large enough for the needs of a family like Mrs. Austen's, which included only herself and daughters, and Miss Martha Lloyd. The front door opens into a passageway used by the members of a laborers' club which occupies all of the lower floor to the left of the entry. As I entered the apartment where "Mansfield Park," "Emma," and "Persuasion"

¹ "Chawton Cottage has long been pulled down, and no picture of it exists" (*Life of Jane Austen* by Mrs. Malden, published May, 1889)

were written, its sole occupant, a middle-aged laborer, looked up from the newspaper he was reading, and courteously acknowledged the presence of his landlord, Mr. Knight, and myself. The place, now used as a club-room, contains a billiard-table and several substantial benches and tables. Mugs of beer are now called for where once the orange wine was sipped ; and the London dailies form the literature of the room that aforesaid contained the manuscripts of the six books upon which has since securely rested the renown of the famous woman who lived and wrote therein.

Besides the laborers' club the cottage contains three cottagers' dwellings, entered from the rear, and in one of these stands a solid old bureau, once the property of Jane Austen's mother. Going through the house, we passed out by the west door at the rear, which opens upon a large garden-plot now divided among the cottagers to whose use it is appropriated. The bushes which I saw growing against the wall are for the most part sturdy Banksia roses planted there at least half a century ago by Cassandra Austen, who was very fond of flowers. It was a liking she shared with her niece by marriage, the wife of her nephew, Edward Knight ; and the two ladies spent many long hours here and at the great house in the Park in consultation over their favorite plants.

The life which the Austens were to spend at Chawton was materially different in tenor from that passed at Southampton and Bath. In those

towns the social distractions were many ; at Chawton they were necessarily few. Instead of looking from their windows upon streets full of fashionable pleasure-seekers, as when in Bath, or upon castle walls or sail-dotted waters, as when living in the ancient seaport between the Itchen and the Test, the Austens could now behold no more animated a scene than that afforded by a country road with its comparatively infrequent passers-by. For the many shops of Bath and Southampton they exchanged the few inferior ones of the small town of Alton, a mile or more away ; and for the numerous peals of church-bells, that had sounded for so long a period in their ears, they could hear only the bell from the small parish church close at hand, or that from the venerable pile at Alton dedicated to Saint Nicholas. But the change from city to country, from animation to quiet and seclusion, was one they did not find all unwelcome. Perhaps had it not been made, those three early novels of Jane's had never received their final revision, or the later three been written at all. It is certain that neither at Bath nor at Southampton did she obtain the leisure for writing which had once been found in the old rectory at Steventon, and which was now to be hers in the retirement of Chawton Cottage.

From now until that last journey to Winchester, eight years later, the chief occasions of Jane's leaving home were to be her visits to her brother Henry in London, or to Edward (who had now formally

taken the name of Knight) at Godmersham. She enjoyed these trips exceedingly, but was always ready to return to Chawton and to Cassandra, from whom separation became more and more of a pain as years went on.

What the rather frequent journeys to London brought into her life we first learn from her letters written at her brother Henry's home in Sloane Street, in April of 1811. The theatre was always a delight to her, and she looked forward to seeing one or more plays whenever she went to London. On this particular occasion she was very much disappointed over a change of bill occurring on a certain night when Henry Austen had planned to take his wife and sister to the theatre, which substituted "Hamlet" for "King John." "We are to go on Monday to 'Macbeth' instead. It is a great disappointment to us both," she declares, — an expression of regret which perhaps reveals the tendency of her Shakespearian preferences. Few play-goers of the present, I imagine, would grieve overmuch at a change which gave them "Hamlet" for one of the historical plays. What actually happened on the evening in question we hear of later: —

"We *did* go to the play, after all, on Saturday. We went to the Lyceum, and saw the 'Hypocrite,' — an old play taken from Molière's 'Tartuffe,' — and were well entertained. Dowton and Mathews were the good actors; Mrs. Edwin was the heroine, and her performance is just what it used to be. I have no chance

of seeing Mrs. Siddons. She *did* act on Monday ; but as Henry was told by the box-keeper that he did not think she would, the plans and all thought of it were given up. I should particularly have liked seeing her in Constance, and could swear at her with little effort for disappointing me."

The spectacle of Jane Austen meditating an outburst of profanity, even in jest, differs materially from the sedate portrait in browns and greys which some of her admirers have painted of her, and to my thinking is not the less attractive, because the more human, of the two.

One of the diversions of this London visit was a *musicale* at her brother's ; and knowing what we do of her general attractiveness, it occasions us no surprise to learn that her company was in great demand in the pauses of the entertainment, and to find her declaring, —

"I was quite surrounded by acquaintance, especially gentlemen ; and with Mr. Hampson, Mr. Seymour, Mr. W. Knatchbull, Mr. Guillemarde, Mr. Cure, a Captain Simpson, brother to *the* Captain Simpson, besides Mr. Walter and Mr. Egerton, in addition to the Cookes and Miss Beckford and Miss Middleton, I had quite as much upon my hands as I could do."

Other pleasures of these London weeks consisted of excursions to the Liverpool Museum and the British Gallery ; and her remark that she had some amusement at each, though her preference for men and women always inclined her "to attend more to the company than the sight," is important as showing the same trait of character

which in her writing led her to place small dependence on descriptive backgrounds to enhance her effects. Then there were walks in Kensington Gardens, drives, dinners, and what Jane always seems to have had pleasure in, — shopping. On this last topic and its attendant train of feminine consequences, she thus enlarges to Cassandra : —

“ I am sorry to tell you that I am getting very extravagant and spending all my money, and what is worse for *you*, I have been spending yours too; for in a linen-draper’s shop, to which I went for checked muslin, and for which I was obliged to give seven shillings a yard, I was tempted by a pretty-colored muslin, and bought ten yards of it on the chance of your liking it. But at the same time, if it should not suit you, you must not think yourself at all obliged to take it; it is only 3*s.* 6*d.* per yard, and I should not in the least mind keeping the whole. In texture it is just what we prefer; but its resemblance to green crewels, I must own, is not great, for the pattern is a small spot. . . . I was very well satisfied with my purchases, — my bugle trimming at 2*s.* 4*d.*, and three pair silk stockings for a little less than 12*s.* a pair. . . . Miss Burton has made me a very pretty little bonnet, and now nothing can satisfy me but I must have a straw hat, of the riding-hat shape, like Mrs. Tilson’s; and a young woman in this neighborhood is actually making me one. I am really very shocking; but it will not be dear at a guinea. Our pelisses are 17*s.* each; she charges only 8*s.* for the making, but the buttons seem expensive, — are expensive, I might have said, for the fact is plain enough. . . . I do *not* mean to provide another trimming for my pelisse, for I am determined to spend no more money; so I shall wear it as it is, longer than

I ought, and then — I do not know. . . . I mean, if I can, to wait for your return before I have my new gown made up, from a notion of their making up to more advantage together; and as I find the muslin is not so wide as it *used to be*, some contrivance may be necessary. I expect the skirt to require one half-breadth cut in gores, besides two whole breadths.”

Cassandra would appear to have made some inquiries regarding her sister's costume at the *musical*, for she is informed that —

“My head-dress was a bugle-band like the border to my gown, and a flower of Mrs. Tilson's. I depended upon hearing something of the evening from Mr. W. K., and am very well satisfied with his notice of me: ‘A very pleasing-looking young woman,’ — that must do. One cannot pretend to anything better now; thankful to have it continued a few years longer.”

When one thinks of Jane Austen at thirty-five, still as handsome as when ten years younger, with her bright animated face, sprightly conversation, and becoming attire, the expression, “a pleasing-looking young woman,” seems decidedly tame, and makes one impatient with the “Mr. W. K.” who had nothing more enthusiastic than this in his vocabulary to say of her. But I am bound to believe that the seven other gentlemen who gathered about her that evening found themselves abundantly able to utter warmer words of praise than these, although the object of it all was not so fortunate as to hear them.

The two years which at this time had elapsed since the removal to Chawton had not been alto-

gether unprofitable ones from the literary point of view. In that period her attention had once more turned to authorship; and during 1809 and 1810 she had been recasting "Elinor and Marianne," which now received its title, "Sense and Sensibility," and also revising "Pride and Prejudice." During her stay in London in the spring of 1811 the former book was slowly passing through the press, — a process which her brother Henry attempted, without much success, to hasten. In connection with her own work appears an allusion to the popular novel of the first half of 1811, Mrs. Brunton's "Self-control": —

"We have tried to get 'Self-control,' but in vain. I *should* like to know what her estimate is, but am always half afraid of finding a clever novel *too clever*, and of finding my own story and my own people all forestalled."

Never were apprehensions more needless than these; for Jane Austen's character-painting was not of the kind which any of her contemporaries could conceive of. In the present instance, Mrs. Brunton's story, "intended to show the power of the religious principle in bestowing self-command, and to bear testimony against a maxim as immoral as indelicate, that 'a reformed rake makes the best husband,'" was quite out of the course adopted by the genius of her sister novelist, who never made formal enunciation of a didactic purpose at the outset of her tales. Still it was not unnatural that Miss Austen, who intended to delineate in Elinor Dash-

wood a woman whose distinguishing characteristic was self-control, should have felt some little anxiety as to what another writer was doing with a similar theme. Two years later, after re-reading Mrs. Brunton's story, she records her views concerning it: —

“I am looking over ‘Self-Control’ again; and my opinion is confirmed of its being an excellently meant, elegantly written work, without anything of nature or probability in it. I declare I do not know whether Laura's passage down the American river is not the most natural, possible, every-day thing she does.”

May of 1811 found Jane back at Chawton and Cassandra at Godmersham; and the recital of the homely household details which the absent sister never wearied of hearing about is resumed. Jane seems to have had but a very moderate liking for flowers; but Cassandra, on the contrary, was very fond of them, and for her sister's sake Jane fills her pages with items concerning them: —

“Some of your flower-seeds are coming up very well; but your mignonette makes a wretched appearance. Miss Benn has been equally unlucky as to hers. She had seed from four different people, and none of it comes up. Our young piony at the foot of the fir-tree has just blown, and looks very handsome; and the whole of the shrubbery border will soon be very gay with pinks and sweet-williams, in addition to the columbines already in bloom. The syringas, too, are coming out. We are likely to have a great crop of Orleans plumbs; but not many greengages, — on the standard scarcely any, three or four dozen, perhaps, against the wall.



REAR OF CHAWTON COTTAGE, WITH GARDEN.

... You cannot imagine—it is not in human nature to imagine — what a nice walk we have round the orchard. The row of beech look very well indeed, and so does the young quick-set hedge in the garden. I hear to-day that an apricot has been detected on one of the trees.”

Verily, the Austen garden, shut in by high walls and shrubbery, and brilliant with pinks, peonies, syringas, and

“Sweet-William with his homely cottage smell,” must have been a charming spot in which to linger on those long June afternoons. But instead of those gay, long-vanished blooms I saw only thrifty cabbages and potatoes growing in the once trim flower-plots; and of all that wealth of blossoms only a few pale roses scattered their petals from the cottage wall.

Summer appears to have begun early in 1811, and to have brought with it what Jane very much disliked, — thunder-storms, — in abundance.

“We sat upstairs,” she writes on May 29, “and had thunder and lightning, as usual. I never knew such a spring for thunder-storms as this has been! Thank God, we have had no bad ones here. I thought myself in luck to have my uncomfortable feelings shared by the mistress of the house, as that procured blinds and candles.”

Two days later Cassandra is informed that “we have had a thunder-storm again this morning. Your letter came to comfort me for it.”

As the summer progressed, the garden began to show forth fruits and vegetables as well as flowers.

“We began pease on Sunday; but our gatherings are very small, not at all like the gathering in the ‘Lady of the Lake.’ Yesterday I had the agreeable surprise of finding several scarlet strawberries quite ripe; had *you* been at home, this would have been a pleasure lost. There are more gooseberries and fewer currants than I thought at first. We must buy currants for our wine.”

Lord Brabourne endeavors to fancy his aunt walking along the paths of the Chawton garden “engaged in deciding upon the fate of one of her heroes or heroines, or maturing the plot of her next book.” It is an attractive picture that is thus summoned up: the high-walled, fragrant pleasance bright with its many blooms, and the tall, graceful figure, in the picturesque dress of the period, moving slowly up and down its walks, perhaps with eyes cast down and hands lightly clasped behind her, like some fair woman in William Morris’s pre-Raphaelite gallery of folk, —

“Midways of a walled garden;”

and it may or may not have had its counterpart in the reality. But in point of fact, wherever her meditations may have taken place, her writing was always done indoors in the family sitting-room, which looked out upon the garden, and where entire seclusion was not possible. Her nephew and biographer says of this: —

“She was careful that her occupation should not be suspected by servants or visitors or any persons beyond her own family party. She wrote upon small

sheets of paper which could easily be put away, or covered with a piece of blotting-paper. There was between the front door and the offices a swing door which creaked when it was opened; but she objected to having this little inconvenience remedied because it gave her notice when any one was coming. . . .

. . . In that well-occupied female party there must have been many precious hours of silence during which the pen was busy at the little mahogany writing-desk, while Fanny Price or Emma Woodhouse or Anne Elliot was growing into beauty and interest. I have no doubt that I and my sisters and cousins, in our visits to Chawton, frequently disturbed this mystic process, without having any idea of the mischief that we were doing; certainly we never should have guessed it by any signs of impatience or irritability in the writer."

In February of this year she began work upon "Mansfield Park," — an occupation which the London visit and correction of the proofs of "Sense and Sensibility" must have somewhat interrupted. As she once wrote that she did not expect the latter book would appear as early as June, we may infer that it was not published before midsummer of 1811. Its authorship was well known to various branches of the Austen kindred; but the time had not yet come for the public to share this knowledge. In the diary of the favorite niece, Fanny, is an entry dated Sept. 28, 1811, which is as follows: —

"Letter from At. Cass., to beg we would not mention that Aunt Jane wrote 'Sense and Sensibility.'"

Save for a few entries in this niece's diary there are no records of Jane Austen's life during the year 1812. Fanny Knight, who was now nineteen, spent some weeks during the spring of that year at Chawton House, in company with her father; and in the constant intercourse maintained during such visits between cottage and manor, the affection between the aunt and niece was strengthened and intensified. Her younger sister, writing in old age to Lord Brabourne, says of his mother in this regard, —

“Your dear mother, being so many years older than the rest of us, was a friend and companion of the two aunts, Cassandra and Jane, particularly of the latter; and they had all sorts of secrets together whilst we were only children.”

As the sisters do not appear to have been separated this year, considerable progress was presumably made upon “Mansfield Park,” since when Cassandra was at home, the younger sister's cares were fewer; and during the last months of the year Jane busied herself in correcting the proofs of “Pride and Prejudice,” which was given to the world in January, 1813. By this date Cassandra was absent upon one of her Godmersham visits; and Jane writes to her on January 29 in high spirits over the appearance of the new book:

“I want to tell you that I have got my own darling child from London. On Wednesday I received one copy sent down by Falkener, with three lines from Henry to say that he had given another to Charles,

and sent a third by the coach to Godmersham. . . . Miss B. dined with us on the very day of the book's coming; and in the evening we fairly set at it, and read half the first volume to her, prefacing that having intelligence from Henry that such a work would soon appear, we had desired him to send it whenever it came out, and I believe it passed with her unsuspected. She was amused, poor soul! *That* she could not help, you know, with two such people to lead the way; but she really does seem to admire Elizabeth. I must confess that I think her as delightful a creature as ever appeared in print; and how I shall be able to tolerate those who do not like *her* at least, I do not know. There are a few typical errors; and a 'said he,' or a 'said she,' would sometimes make the dialogue more immediately clear; but 'I do not write for such dull elves' as have not a great deal of ingenuity themselves. The second volume is shorter than I could wish; but the difference is not so much in reality as in look, there being a larger proportion of narrative in that part. I have lop't and crop't so successfully, however, that I imagine it must be rather shorter than 'Sense and Sensibility' altogether."

Making requisite allowance for the playful exaggeration here, it is still evident that Miss Austen took the honest pride in good work which every real artist does; and that a recognition of its merits was by no means a matter of indifference to her. The allusion to the lopping and cropping of "Pride and Prejudice" hints at the careful revision it had finally undergone. One can readily fancy the pleasure with which she listened to her mother's reading, and to the comments of the

visitor, who had not the faintest notion that the author of those amusing chapters was close to her elbow. A few days after, Jane writes of another reading from the entertaining volume, —

“ Our second evening’s reading to Miss B. had not pleased me so well ; but I believe something must be attributed to my mother’s too rapid way of getting on. Though she perfectly understands the characters herself, she cannot speak as they ought. Upon the whole, however, I am quite vain enough and well satisfied enough. The work is rather too light and bright and sparkling. It wants shade ; it wants to be stretched out here and there with a long chapter of sense, if it could be had ; if not, of solemn, specious nonsense, about something unconnected with the story ; an essay on writing, a critique on Walter Scott, or the history of Buonaparté, or something that would form a contrast, and bring the reader with increased delight to the playfulness and epigrammatism of the general style.”

In the ironical suggestion as to the “ specious nonsense ” which might be inserted in the tale, we gain a notion of her real feeling respecting matters of style, — a sentiment which never allowed her to indulge in digressions in the course of her novels, which consequently present perhaps the finest instances of unimpeded direct narration in the whole range of English fiction. From the extract which immediately follows, we learn who were her favorite characters in “ *Pride and Prejudice* ” :

“ I am exceedingly pleased that you can say what you do, after having gone through the whole work ;

and Fanny's praise is very gratifying. My hopes were tolerably strong of *her*, but nothing like a certainty. Her liking Darcy and Elizabeth is enough. She might hate all the others, if she would. I have her opinion under her own hand this morning; but your transcript of it, which I read first, was not and is not the less acceptable. To *me* it is all praise; but the more exact truth which she sends *you* is good enough."

At the time these sentences were written — namely, in February of 1813 — "Mansfield Park" was nearly finished; but she worked upon it very slowly and carefully, and it was a year later before she was reading the completed manuscript with her brother Henry, whose judgment in matters literary she appears to have valued highly, however little confidence she may have felt disposed to place in other judgments of his.

More or less speculation has been indulged in regarding the actual position of "Mansfield Park;" but it is the opinion of the Austens of the present generation that no precise locality furnished the materials for the description. It is not at all improbable, however, that the vicinity of Chawton, as an appreciative writer has pointed out, was in the author's mind in several of the descriptions in "Mansfield Park" and "Emma." Mr. Kebbel, the critic to whom allusion is made, suggests that Chawton House and Chawton Cottage were the models from which Jane drew the stately abode of Sir Thomas Bertram and the "White House," which was the home of the never-to-be-forgotten

Mrs. Norris. There is nothing to offer which very strongly militates against this suggestion; and to one familiar with Chawton Park, it seems a very likely one. Still Jane Austen was well acquainted with the surroundings of more than one manor-house in Kent as well as in Hants, and may, and doubtless did, have more than one such in mind when writing "Mansfield Park."

In regard to "Emma," Mr. Kebbel fancies that the Highbury described within its pages may have been meant for either Holybourne or Froyle, villages a few miles distant from Alton; but any one who searches for a likeness may as easily trace one between Highbury and certain Kentish or Somerset villages which Jane knew well as between Highbury and either of these two villages in East Hants. Except where existing places were actually named in her books, however, it is probable that no recognizable description of localities was attempted.

She found opportunity in the intervals of this winter's tasks to read much, for new books appeared at Chawton with great frequency; and in February she writes, —

"We quite run over with books. She [Mrs. Austen] has got Sir John Carr's 'Travels in Spain;' and I am reading a Society octavo, an 'Essay on the Military Police and Institutions of the British Empire,' by Captain Pasley of the Engineers,—a book which I protested against at first, but which upon trial I find delightfully written and highly entertaining. I am as much in love with the author as I ever was with

Clarkson or Buchanan, or the two Mr. Smiths¹ of the city. The first soldier I ever sighed for; but he does write with extraordinary force and spirit. Yesterday, moreover, brought us 'Mrs. Grant's Letters' with Mr. White's compliments."

In May of this year, Jane made a journey to London in her brother's curricule, going by way of Guildford and Esher, and spending twelve hours *en route*. A leisurely progress it was through the lovely county of Surrey, white with hawthorn blooms and fresh with all the beauty of an English spring; and she seems to have thoroughly enjoyed every mile of it. At Guildford and Esher, where stoppages for breakfast and dinner were made, she and her brother took short strolls while the horses were resting. Of Guildford, which many later tourists have deemed picturesque she records: "From some views which that stroll gave us, I think most highly of the situation of Guildford. We wanted all our brothers and sisters to be standing with us in the bowling-green and looking towards Horsham."

The country between Guildford and Ripley seemed to her "particularly pretty, also about Painshill;" and of Esher she writes,—

"From a Mr. Spicer's grounds, which we walked into before dinner, the views were beautiful. I cannot say what we did *not* see; but I should think there could

¹ Horace and James Smith, the authors of "The Rejected Addresses," which was published in 1812.

not be a wood or a meadow or palace or remarkable spot in England that was not spread out before us on one side or other."

In March of the year following, she made the same excursion with her brother, but presumably in a close carriage, for there were some flurries of snow during the second day, the journey being broken by a night's rest at Cobham on the way; and a portion of the time was employed in reading together the manuscript of "Mansfield Park." Concerning this, Cassandra is informed: —

"We did not begin reading till Bentley Green. Henry's approbation is hitherto even equal to my wishes. He says it is different from the other two, but does not appear to think it at all inferior. He has only married Mrs. R. I am afraid he has gone through the most entertaining part. He took to Lady B. and Mrs. N. most kindly, and gives great praise to the drawing of the characters. He understands them all, likes Fanny, and, I think, foresees how it will all be. . . . He admires H. Crawford, — I mean, properly, as a clever, pleasant man. I tell you all the good I can, as I know how much you will enjoy it."

In the course of the earlier of these visits, she amused herself by endeavoring to discover, in the picture galleries to which she went, some portraits which should resemble her own mental pictures of the heroines of "Pride and Prejudice." No portrait of Elizabeth met her eye either in the Spring Gardens Exhibition, or among Sir Joshua Reynolds's paintings then on view in Pall Mall; but at the former place she did perceive a portrait which

satisfied her ideas of how Jane should look, as we shall see : —

“ It is not thought a good collection ; but I was very well pleased, particularly (pray tell Fanny) with a small portrait of Mrs. Bingley, excessively like her, . . . exactly herself,— size, shaped face, features, and sweetness ; there never was a greater likeness. She is dressed in a white gown, with green ornaments, which convinces me of what I had always supposed, that green was a favorite colour with her.”

The only modern and partial inheritor of Jane Austen's peculiar shade of realism, he who created Barseshire, and filled it full of living men and women, Anthony Trollope, confesses that Barse was to him a real county, and the folk who trod the streets of his cathedral city of Barchester — the Grantleys, the Proudies, and the rest — had as actual an existence as the people who passed him in the London streets.

To Jane Austen, her characters were real personages likewise. So much time was invariably spent upon each of her books, in composition, revision, reading the manuscripts aloud to the few persons admitted to her confidence, and whose critical taste she valued, as well as in frequent discussions regarding them with these same persons, that they became as much a part of her life as the men and women of flesh and blood whom she saw every day. A few of them, indeed, like Elinor Dashwood, Elizabeth Bennet, Fanny Price, Emma Woodhouse, and Anne Elliot, she loved

almost as she loved her own brothers and sister ; and anything to the disparagement of these creations of her brain hurt her as keenly as if uttered against one of her household. Many great novelists have felt similarly ; but not all have expressed themselves as naively on the point as did she.

It was a habit with her to talk over her characters with her niece Fanny when they met ; and on one or more occasions the niece amused her aunt Jane by writing to her in the character of Miss Darcy.

In September, 1813, in company with this niece and two other daughters of her brother Edward, Jane paid a short visit to her brother Henry, whose wife had died earlier in the year, and who had lately removed to Henrietta Street. Although Jane was in London but three nights on this occasion, two of them were spent at the theatre. The opera of "Don Juan," very possibly Glück's ballet of that name, and not Mozart's "Don Giovanni," since she mentions it as the third performance of the evening, was what the party listened to the first night, and "Midas" and "The Clandestine Marriage" on the second.

During the time of this visit she heard from her London acquaintances a good deal of praise bestowed upon "Pride and Prejudice," the character of Elizabeth being especially liked.

She was unfeignedly fond of Crabbe's poetry, and evidently would have preferred meeting him to any other literary light of her time ; and there are

several jesting allusions to this admiration of hers in the correspondence of this year. "I am in agonies," she exclaims in one of her letters from Henrietta Street, — "I have not yet seen Mr. Crabbe;" and in an account of the second play she witnessed she stops to declare that she "was particularly disappointed at seeing nothing of Mr. Crabbe. I felt sure of him when I saw that the boxes were fitted up with crimson velvet."

"No," she writes a month later from Kent, "I have never seen the death of Mrs. Crabbe. I have only just been making out from one of his prefaces that he probably was married. It is almost ridiculous. Poor woman! I will comfort *him* as well as I can, but I do not undertake to be good to her children. She had better not leave any."

Whether the poet Crabbe ever read any of Jane Austen's novels, I do not know; but that she should have enjoyed his verse is easily explainable, for there is the same patience of realism in "The Village" and "The Borough" as in "Emma" or "Mansfield Park." Both writers were persons of keen but necessarily somewhat restricted sympathies; and both were minute observers of the events of common daily life. Had the poet possessed any of the humorous perceptions of the novelist, his realism, while remaining no less true than hers, would have happily wanted that unrelieved sombre tinge which, more than anything else, has caused his verse to fall so much out of favor with a later generation.

The hurried London visit, so full of the play, of calls and shopping, of which latter occupation a good deal is told us, was succeeded by a two months' sojourn at Godmersham, to which, in fact, the London expedition was but the prelude. Between the details of life at a great country house, like that at Godmersham Park, and those which concerned a family in plain though comfortable circumstances, like the one in Chawton Cottage, there was necessarily a wide difference; and Jane seems to have momentarily fancied that her sister might think her indifferent to the more homely household matters pertaining to Chawton when surrounded by the luxury of her brother's home. Accordingly we hear made such an affectionate request as this, which shows, if such testimony be needed, how near to Jane's heart were all the small events occurring in her mother's home. Her own Miss Bates did not dwell upon similar trifles with more kindly perseverance: "Let me know when you begin the new tea, and the new white wine. My present elegancies have not yet made me indifferent to such matters. I am still a cat if I see a mouse."

In return for Cassandra's items of news she gives in her own sportive fashion a recital of everything in her present life that can possibly interest those at home. The two nephews, Edward and George, by this time at Oxford, are mentioned at times in some such strain as this: "George writes cheerfully and quietly, . . . went to lecture on Wednesday,

states some of his expenses, and concludes with saying, 'I am afraid I shall be poor.' I am glad he thinks about it so soon."

Perhaps the event of chief importance to Jane at this time was a visit which her brother Charles and his wife paid to the Godmersham household: "Here they are, safe and well, just like their own nice selves,— Fanny looking as neat and white this morning as possible; and dear Charles all affectionate, placid, quiet, cheerful good-humor."

In these last years of Jane's life, she saw less of her youngest brother than of any of the other four; but there was no weakening of the tie in consequence. She knew all the habits and likings of the whole five as intimately as their respective wives could have done, and regarded all such topics with affectionate as well as sometimes amused interest: —

"This cold weather," she writes, in mid-October of 1813, to Cassandra, now visiting Henry Austen in London, "comes very fortunately for Edward's nerves, with such a houseful: it suits him exactly; he is all alive and cheerful. Poor James, on the contrary, must be running his toes into the fire."

The cold weather seems to have infused a good deal of liveliness into Kentish society at this time, and not limited its beneficial effects solely to "Edward's nerves;" for a concert at Chilham Castle, a ball at Canterbury, and any number of friendly visitations were among the mild dissipations of this

autumn. And Jane Austen was a part of all she describes, and enjoyed the interchange of social amenities as heartily as she had ever done, like the sensible woman that she was. As usual, too, she kept her eyes wide open in the midst of it all ; and the tiny thumb-nail sketches she draws of the various people she meets are just as spirited as ever. If they seem to us now a trifle unsympathetic occasionally, it must be remembered that she knew most thoroughly the person to whom she wrote, and therefore did not pause in her rapid sketchings to throw in the lines required to soften them. Her object was simply to amuse Cassandra, who, she well knew, would mentally supply these same modifying touches while she read.

“I have extended my lights and increased my acquaintance a good deal within these two days. Lady Honeywood you know. I did not sit near enough to be a perfect judge, but I thought her extremely pretty, and her manners have all the recommendations of ease and good-humor and unaffectedness ; and going about with four horses and nicely dressed herself, she is altogether a perfect sort of woman. . . . We met only the Bretons at Chilham Castle, besides a Mr. and Mrs. Osborne and a Miss Lee staying in the house, and were only fourteen altogether. My brother and Fanny thought it the pleasantest party they had ever known there ; and I was very well entertained by bits and scraps. I had long wanted to see Dr. Breton ; and his wife amuses me very much with her affected refinement and elegance. Miss Lee I found very conversable ; she admires Crabbe as she ought. She is at an age of reason, ten years older than myself at least.”

“Poor Dr. Isham,” she tells Cassandra, in one of the letters of this period, “is obliged to admire ‘P. and P.’ and to send me word that he is sure he shall not like Madame d’Arblay’s new novel half so well.”

As “The Wanderer,” the “new novel” alluded to, which was published a few months later, is an excessively dull tale, “poor Dr. Isham” was not paying, after all, what could be styled an extravagant compliment.

But “P. and P.,” as Jane calls it, was now growing rapidly into favor; and in November she was able to tell her sister, —

“Since I wrote last, my second edition has stared me in the face. Mary tells me that Eliza means to buy it. I wish she may. . . . I cannot help hoping that *many* will feel themselves obliged to buy it. I shall not mind imagining it a disagreeable duty to them, so as they do it. Mary heard before she left home that it was very much admired at Cheltenham, and that it was given to Miss Hamilton. It is pleasant to have such a respectable writer named. I cannot tire *you*, I am sure, on this subject, or I would apologize. What weather and what news! We have enough to do to admire them both. I hope you derive your full share of enjoyment from each.”

The lady to whom Jane looked up as “such a respectable writer,” was Miss Elizabeth Hamilton, who died in 1816 at the age of fifty-eight, and whose “Letters of a Hindoo Rajah,” “The Modern Philosopher,” and other works, although once much admired, are now as seldom read as “The Faerie Queene” and infinitely less talked about.

"I am read and admired in Ireland, too," Jane notes early in November for her sister's pleasure. "There is a Mrs. Fletcher, the wife of a judge, an old lady, and very good and very clever, who is all curiosity to know about me, — what I am like, and so forth. I am not known to her by *name*, however." Then follows a shaft of playful irony aimed at herself: "I do not despair of having my picture in the Exhibition at last, — all white and red, with my head on one side; or perhaps I may marry young Mr. d'Arblay."

While Jane was in Kent she experienced much anxiety respecting the ill health of her brother Henry; and allusions to his condition are of frequent occurrence in the correspondence. The elder sister was now with him, leaving the Chawton household to be cared for by Miss Lloyd; and the younger sister wished to be with her brother also if her services should be needed on her return from Kent. Accordingly she assures Cassandra to this effect: —

"I cannot be quite easy without staying a little while with Henry, unless he wishes it otherwise; his illness and the dull time of year together make me feel that it would be horrible of me not to offer to remain with him; and therefore unless you know of any objection, I wish you would tell him with my best love that I shall be most happy to spend ten days or a fortnight in Henrietta Street, if he will accept me. I do not offer more than a fortnight, because I shall then have been some time away from home; but it will be a great pleasure to be with him, as it always is."

The offer was accepted; and in the last letter from Kent she says: "I was only afraid *you* might think the offer superfluous; but you have set my heart at ease. Tell Henry that I *will* stay with him, let it be ever so disagreeable to him."

The Godmersham visit ended on the 13th of November; and a day or two later she was with her brother Henry in London. This particular brother, who had always, as Jane expresses it, "a turn for being ill," was for that reason an object of especial solicitude to his mother and sisters, and particularly so since the death of his wife had left him alone, with no one in his household to take thought for his comfort. His illness at this time was not a long one; and in February of 1814, he visited his mother and sisters at Chawton, and on his return to London took his younger sister with him. This was the trip beguiled of its tedium by the reading of "Mansfield Park," as we have already heard; and the reading begun at Bentley Green was concluded in London some days later. The two were evidently very happy over the reading, — he in sincere admiration of his sister's talents, she in the knowledge that her work was being approved by the critic whose literary judgment she most valued. Let us glance for a moment at her pleased reporting of some of his judgments: —

"Henry has this moment said that he likes my 'M. P.' better and better; he is now in the third volume. I believe *now* he has changed his mind as to foreseeing the end; he said yesterday, at least, that he de-

fied anybody to say whether H. C., would be reformed, or would forget Fanny in a fortnight. . . . Henry has finished 'Mansfield Park;' and his approbation has not lessened. He found the last half of the last volume *extremely interesting.*"

To my thinking there is something very delightful in the unselfish enjoyment which the Austen kindred took in the achievements of their most gifted member. Just as in the old days at the rectory at Steventon the young people there had freely applauded the juvenile sketches of little Jane, so now as men and women in middle life they maintained the same hearty, unaffected interest in her writing, with never a trace of envy present to mar it. She wrote and was happy in the writing. The brothers and sister read and delighted in the reading, one and all. Their approval, and that of the nephews and nieces who were now old enough to read her books, supplied her with sufficient incentive to proceed, although, as we have seen, the applause of a wider circle of readers afforded her much gratification.

As usual, there was much play-going on the part of Jane and her brother, who seem to have been fonder of this amusement than any others of the family; and at this time she saw Kean as Shylock, and "could not imagine better acting." She likewise heard Coffey's ballad farce, "The Devil to Pay," which very much amused her, Arne's opera of "Artaxerxes," and Dibdin's comic opera of "The Farmer's Wife," which does not seem to have

yielded her unbounded delight, for she remarks of the chief singer: "Her merit in singing is, I dare say, great; that she gave *me* no pleasure is no reflection upon her, nor, I hope, upon myself, being what Nature made me upon that article. All that I am sensible of in Miss S. is a pleasing person and no skill in acting."

As usual, too, the London shop-windows held out many temptations to Jane, who was never indifferent about what she wore, and had a weakness for becoming coiffures in particular. Cassandra is therefore informed that there are "a great many pretty caps in the windows of Cranbourn Alley. I hope when you come we shall both be tempted. I have been ruining myself in black satin ribbon with a proper pearl edge; and now I am trying to draw it up into a kind of roses, instead of putting it in plain double plaits."

Just what sort of gowns she was wearing at this time we learn from the following item: —

"I have determined to trim my lilac sarsnet with black satin ribbon, just as my China crape is, 6*d.* width at the bottom, 3*d.* or 4*d.* at top. Ribbon trimmings are all the fashion at Bath, and I dare say the fashions of the two places are alike enough in that point to content *me*. With this addition it will be a very useful gown, happy to go anywhere."

During April, May, and June of 1814, Edward Knight and his family were living at Chawton House instead of at Godmersham; and the intercourse be-

tween cottage and great house consequently was of the most uninterrupted character. When the cottage was not dining at the great house, the latter was dining at the cottage; and Jane and her favorite niece appear by the entries in the latter's diary to have been almost inseparable. Sometimes they walked to Alton on shopping expeditions, and very often they roamed about Chawton Park, its gardens, and stretch of forest in company; and as nearly as it was possible for any human being to do, the niece supplied to Jane the place of her sister Cassandra, now with Henry Austen in London. The path across "the Pasture" from the village to the great house was one often trodden by Jane whenever her brother's family were resident there; and one of her nieces who was living within the past five years vividly recalled in old age the figure of her Aunt Jane walking along this path with head a little to one side, and sometimes a very small cushion pressed against her cheek, if she were suffering from face-ache, as she not unfrequently did in later life.

Sometime in the summer of 1814 "Mansfield Park" appeared in print; but the only allusion to the fact which her letters afford is a scrap of commendation quoted from her friends the Cookes, whom she appears to have visited in July or late in June:—

"In addition to their other claims on me they admire 'Mansfield Park' exceedingly. Mr. Cooke says 'it is the most sensible novel he ever read,' and

the manner in which I treat the clergy delights them very much."

In August, Henry Austen having lately removed from Henrietta Street to 23 Hans Place, Jane visited him in his new quarters, which she calls delightful, and adds that they more than met her expectations, the garden being "quite a love." The real object of the change of residence seems to be revealed in the following passage, relating to her brother: —

"Henry wants me to see more of his Hanwell favorite, and has written to invite her to spend a day or two here with me. His scheme is to fetch her on Saturday. I am more and more convinced that he will marry again soon, and like the idea of *her* better than of anybody else at hand."

How serious the nature of Mr. Henry Austen's attentions to "his Hanwell favorite" we shall probably never know; for however much his feelings may have been interested, he remained a widower until some time after Jane's death, when he married Miss Eleanor Jackson of London, who was presumably not the "Hanwell favorite." During these visits Jane of course was hostess to her brother's many friends; and she writes in amusing fashion of some expected guests whom she was to entertain at dinner, —

"Mr. Hampson dines here to-morrow, and proposed bringing his son; so I must submit to seeing George

Hampson, though I had hoped to go through life without it. It was one of my vanities, like your not reading 'Patronage.'

As will have been noted in the course of these pages, Jane Austen's journeys, though frequent, were not extended or greatly varied. London she knew well, and the south of England, from Canterbury on the east to Exeter and its vicinity on the west; but except for a casual reference there is nothing in her correspondence to show that she was ever fifty miles north of London in her life. That on one occasion, however, she must have travelled in Scotland would seem to be clear, from the incidental reference just mentioned, which occurs in a letter of August, 1814. She is describing her journey to London in an over-crowded coach, and declares that "it put me in mind of my own coach between Edinburgh and Stirling."

It appears just a little singular that she should have made so important a journey as this implies, for a trip to Scotland was not lightly undertaken by south of England people in those days; but the circumstance appears nowhere else in her correspondence. She who was so alive to the beauty of Lyme-Regis could not certainly have remained insensible to the scenes which must have met her eyes in such a tour as this. As, however, it is still uncertain that we have the whole of her correspondence with her sister, the absence of detail regarding it is partially explainable. It becomes still more so when we reflect that very few of her other

letters have been preserved, or, what amounts to the same thing, printed.

During the year 1814, Jane maintained an active correspondence with her niece, Anna Austen, who was then engaged upon a novel, the manuscript of which she submitted to her aunt Jane in the early summer for her advice and criticism. Jane's first letters to her niece show the ready interest she took in the younger woman's work, and her willingness to aid when she could : —

“ I am very much obliged to you for sending your MS. It has entertained me extremely, — indeed, all of us. I read it aloud to your Grandmamma and Aunt Cass., and we were all very much pleased. The spirit does not droop at all. Sir Thos., Lady Helen, and St. Julian are very well done; and Cecilia continues to be interesting in spite of her being so amiable. . . . I like the beginning of Devereux For-ester very much; a great deal better than if he had been very good or very bad. . . . I do not like a lover speaking in the 3rd person. . . . *I* think it not natural.”

This was in June; and in August the aunt writes on the same subject, —

“ I like the name ‘ Which is the Heroine ? ’ very well, and I dare say shall grow to like it very much in time; but ‘ Enthusiasm ’ was something so very superior that my common title must appear to disadvantage. . . . My corrections have not been more important than heretofore; here and there we have thought the sense could be expressed in fewer words, and I have scratched out Sir Thos. from walking with the others to the stables, &c., the very day after breaking his arm; for

though I find your papa did walk out immediately after his arm was set, I think it can be so little usual as to appear unnatural in a book. Lynn will not do. Lynn is towards forty miles from Dawlish, and would not be talked of there. I have put Starcross instead. . . .

“ I have also scratched out the introduction between Lord Portman and his brother and Mr. Griffin. A country surgeon (don't tell Mr. C. Lyford) would not be introduced to men of their rank; and when Mr. P. is first brought in, he would not be introduced as the Honourable. That distinction is never mentioned at such times,—at least, I believe not. . . . Let the Portmans go to Ireland; but as you know nothing of the manners there, you had better not go with them. You will be in danger of giving false representations. Stick to Bath and the Foresters. There you will be quite at home.”

In giving this last piece of advice, Jane was following strictly in the line she had long ago marked out for herself,—that of describing only localities, customs, and people with which she was thoroughly familiar. The care she took in reference to small matters in her own novels is hinted at in the instructions to her niece. “ Starcross,” which she inserted in place of Lynn, is but a few miles from Dawlish, and would naturally be more talked of there than another town forty miles away. It is a trifle, like the other matters objected to; but to Jane Austen anything which jarred against the probabilities, however slightly, ceased to be a trifle.

In a letter of September 9, written after reading more of the manuscript, which the niece was for-

warding as she wrote, a few chapters at a time, there is more minuteness of criticism : —

“ You describe a sweet place ; but your descriptions are often more minute than will be liked. You give too many particulars of right hand and left. Mrs. Forester is not careful enough of Susan’s health. Susan ought not to be walking out so soon after heavy rains, taking long walks in the dirt. An anxious mother would not suffer it. I like your Susan . . . as she is now exceedingly ; but I am not quite so well satisfied with her behavior to George R. At first she seems all over attachment and feeling, and afterwards to have none at all ; she is so extremely confused at the ball, and so well satisfied apparently with Mr. Morgan. She seems to have changed her character.”

More suggestions follow a fortnight later : —

“ Devereux Forester’s being ruined by his vanity is extremely good ; but I wish you would not let him plunge into a ‘ vortex of dissipation.’ I do not object to the thing, but I cannot bear the expression ; it is such thorough novel slang, and so old that I dare say Adam met with it in the first novel he opened. . . . What can you do with Egerton to increase the interest for him ? . . . He might lend all his money to Captain Morris ; but then he would be a great fool if he did. Cannot the Morrises quarrel, and he reconcile them ? Excuse the liberty I take in these suggestions.”

Early in November the niece to whom these bits of advice were addressed became the wife of Benjamin Lefroy, the son of Jane’s early friend. The young couple removed at once to Hendon, a

few miles from London ; and Jane tells her niece to "make everybody at Hendon admire 'Mansfield Park.'"

Before the end of November the aunt, who had now gone to visit her brother in London, drove with him to Hendon to see the young people, from which expedition she returned much pleased. The marriage does not seem to have occasioned any serious break in the new Mrs. Lefroy's literary labors ; for early in December she sent to her aunt another instalment of the story, and Jane's response to this enclosure is just as unwearyingly kind as if she had not been occupied for the previous six months in advising and suggesting about innumerable previous pages. She comments on one of the incidents of the tale in her usual animated strain, —

"St. Julian's having been in love with the aunt gives Cecilia an additional interest with him. I like the idea, — a very proper compliment to an aunt ! I rather imagine, indeed, that nieces are seldom chosen but out of compliment to some aunt or other. I dare say Ben was in love with me once, and would never have thought of you if he had not supposed me dead of scarlet fever."

Whether Mrs. Anna Lefroy's novel was ever finished is doubtful. Other interests probably entered her life, and her literary aspirations faded out of sight. Her stepbrother, Mr. Austen-Leigh, asserts that it never was published. Certainly, at this point it disappears entirely from the cor-

response. In August following the Lefroys removed from Hendon to a small estate called Wyards, near Alton, and within an easy walk of Chawton; and to this place her aunt's next letter which has been preserved is addressed. It is a note, bearing date of September 29, and includes no mention of the novel which had occupied the chief portion of the correspondence between the two the year previous. Very possibly the aunt had foreseen the probable result of her niece's labors, but forbore, with characteristic thoughtfulness, to say a word of discouragement, trusting that time would convince the young author of the futility of her labors. Certain of her criticisms make it tolerably clear to my mind that she could never have entertained any strong hopes of the book's success if printed. Yet however this may have been, her time was given for her niece's benefit freely and ungrudgingly. But indeed no confidence that was reposed in Jane Austen's kindness of heart was ever misplaced.

IX.

LAST YEARS AT CHAWTON; "EMMA;" "PERSUASION."

IN the month of October, 1815, Henry Austen was again taken ill; and on this occasion his condition was considered more critical than it had ever been in previous seizures. His sister Jane, who was at this time staying with him to attend to the publication of "Emma," became much alarmed, and on the 22d of the month wrote for her brother James and Cassandra, and the day following for her brother Edward, as she feared the low fever which had prostrated him was likely to prove fatal. It was an illness which in its ultimate consequences concerned a greater number of people than the Austen connection, large as that was. The world could better have spared a Henry Austen than a Jane; yet the handsome, accomplished man, who had spent all his life in drifting from one thing to another, full of schemes which came to little, and who succeeded in nothing except in being always fascinating and agreeable, was destined to live five and thirty years longer, while his sister, in the midst of her devotion to his needs at this time, undoubtedly contracted the

disease which, developing slowly but surely, ended her own life less than two years after.

Although this was a sharp sickness, Mr. Austen seems to have been so far convalescent in another week that his brothers could return to their homes relieved of their fears in great part. Cassandra remained with her brother and sister until November 20, when she returned to Chawton with Edward Knight, who, with his daughter Fanny, had again visited his brother Henry for a few days. The niece, however, stayed until the 8th of December; and the invalid's condition having rapidly improved, they were able to enjoy each other's society without feeling the weight of so much anxiety as had hitherto been borne by the entire family to a certain extent, but especially by Jane.

"Emma," which Jane had been busied over in Chawton for many months previously, and which had been nearly finished as long ago as March, was now advertised to appear on Saturday, Dec. 16, 1815. It seems to have gone more rapidly through the press than its predecessors had done, especially the later chapters of it; and a rapid succession of proof-sheets was kept circulating between her brother's house in Hans Place and Mr. Murray's printing-office. The labor and thought involved in the proper attention to them must have been no light burden to bear at a time when her brother's state of health demanded a large amount of watchful care from her. These were the last proof-sheets that she was ever to concern herself with, and

“Emma” the last book of hers she was destined to behold in print.

The fact of her authorship of the three foregoing novels had for many months been practically an open secret. It could not help being such, now that the knowledge was shared by so large a circle of relatives and friends; and she had ceased to care greatly that the personality of the author should remain unknown. Chance, however, brought her name prominently before the world.

Her brother's physician had been one of the medical attendants of the Prince Regent; and knowing that his patient's sister was the author of “Sense and Sensibility” and the two novels by the same hand which had succeeded it, he informed her, no doubt to her great surprise, that the books in question were greatly admired by the Prince, who read them often, and kept a set in each of his royal residences. He further observed that he had told the Prince that the author of the tales which had so much delighted him was then in London, and that His Royal Highness had requested his librarian at Carlton House, Mr. J. S. Clarke, to call upon her. This unexpected information pleased her, no doubt; but it does not appear that the notice of the Prince Regent, whom she styles in her letters the “P. R.,” was unduly valued by her, nor that she was especially overcome by the royal condescension when Mr. Clarke called upon her next day and invited her to Carlton House, adding that the Prince Regent had

desired him to admit her to the library and other apartments, and show her every attention.

Naturally enough the invitation was accepted ; and while the courteous librarian was doing the honors, — for the admiration of the future George the Fourth for her books was not so great as to inspire him with a desire to behold their author,— he informed her that the Regent had graciously directed him to say that if she intended writing another novel, she was at liberty to dedicate it to His Royal Highness.

The First Gentleman of Europe has very few claims upon the regard of posterity ; but it must always be set down to his credit that at a time when the average standard of literary taste was so radically opposed to that which finds its gratification in work like Miss Austen's, he was sufficiently acute to perceive and admire her peculiar and distinctive excellence ; and it must be admitted that from his point of view he paid to her one of the highest compliments he knew how to bestow. The dedication for which he thus gave permission was accordingly prefixed to "Emma," then nearly through the press, and led to a correspondence between Jane Austen and the courteous librarian, whose own admiration for her talents, although perfectly sincere, is curiously wanting in any adequate comprehension of their scope. His royal patron would hardly have fallen into a misapprehension like that revealed in the letters by Mr. Clarke which follow. Not knowing how far she might rely upon the verbal permission

given on the occasion of her visit, Miss Austen soon after wrote to Mr. Clarke in relation to the matter : —

Nov. 15, 1815.

SIR, — I must take the liberty of asking you a question. Among the many flattering attentions which I received from you at Carlton House on Monday last was the information of my being at liberty to dedicate any future work to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent without the necessity of any solicitation on my part. Such, at least, I believed to be your words ; but as I am very anxious to be quite certain of what was intended, I entreat you to have the goodness to inform me how such a permission is to be understood, and whether it is incumbent on me to show my sense of the honour by inscribing the work now in the press to His Royal Highness. I should be equally concerned to appear either presumptuous or ungrateful.

To this Mr. Clarke replied immediately, adding a most-surprising suggestion of his own : —

CARLTON HOUSE (Nov. 16, 1815)

DEAR MADAM, — It is certainly not *incumbent* on you to dedicate your work now in the press to His Royal Highness ; but if you wish to do the Regent that honour either now or at any future period, I am happy to send you that permission, which need not require any more trouble or solicitation on your part.

Your late works, Madam, and in particular “Mansfield Park,” reflect the highest honour on your genius and your principles. In every new work your mind seems to increase its energy and power of discrimination. The Regent has read and admired all your publications.

Accept my best thanks for the pleasure your volumes have given me. In the perusal of them I felt a great inclination to write and say so; and I also, dear Madam, wished to be allowed to ask you to delineate in some future work the habits of life, and character, and enthusiasm of a clergyman who should pass his time between the metropolis and the country, who should be something like Beattie's Minstrel, —

“ Silent when glad, affectionate tho' shy,
And in his looks was most demurely sad;
And now he laughed aloud; yet none knew why.”

Neither Goldsmith, nor La Fontaine in his “*Tableau de Famille*,” have in my mind quite delineated an English clergyman, at least of the present day, fond of and entirely engaged in literature, no man's enemy but his own. Pray, dear Madam, think of these things.

Believe me at all times with sincerity and respect,
Your faithful and obliged servant,

J. S. CLARKE, *Librarian*.

This kindly but rather stilted epistle, with its impossible suggestion, must have given great amusement to Jane and her brother; but she answered its appeal with a grave courtesy, taking pains to show why she could not follow out the writer's plan, in a way that would have indicated to any person of moderately keen perceptions that her talent was not to be thus diverted from its natural channel.

Dec. 11.

DEAR SIR, — My “*Emma*” is now so near publication that I feel it right to assure you of my not having forgotten your kind recommendation of an early copy for Carlton House, and that I have Mr. Murray's promise of its being sent to His Royal Highness, under

cover to you, three days previous to the work being really out. I must make use of this opportunity to thank you, dear Sir, for the very high praise you bestow on my other novels. I am too vain to wish to convince you that you have praised them beyond their merits. My greatest anxiety at present is that this fourth work should not disgrace what was good in the others. But on this point I will do myself the justice to declare that whatever may be my wishes for its success, I am strongly haunted with the idea that to those readers who have preferred "Pride and Prejudice" it will appear inferior in wit, and to those who have preferred "Mansfield Park" inferior in good sense. Such as it is, however, I hope you will do me the favour of accepting a copy. Mr. Murray will have directions for sending one. I am quite honoured by your thinking me capable of drawing such a clergyman as you gave the sketch of in your note of Nov 16th. But I assure you I am *not* The comic part of the character I might be equal to, but not the good, the enthusiastic, the literary. Such a man's conversation must at times be on subjects of science and philosophy, of which I know nothing, or at least be occasionally abundant in quotations and allusions which a woman who, like me, knows only her own mother-tongue, and has read little in that, would be totally without the power of giving. A classical education, or at any rate a very extensive acquaintance with English literature, ancient and modern, appears to me quite indispensable for the person who would do any justice to your clergyman; and I think I may boast myself to be, with all possible vanity, the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress

Believe me, dear Sir,

Your obliged and faithful hum^{bl} ser^t.

JANE AUSTEN.

“Mr. Clarke, however,” says Mr. Austen-Leigh, “was not to be discouraged from proposing another subject. He had recently been appointed chaplain and private English secretary to Prince Leopold, who was then about to be united to the Princess Charlotte; and when he again wrote to express the gracious thanks of the Prince Regent for the copy of ‘Emma’ which had been presented, he suggests that ‘an historical romance illustrative of the august House of Cobourg would just now be very interesting,’ and might very properly be dedicated to Prince Leopold. This was much as if Sir William Ross had been set to paint a great battle-piece; and it is amusing to see with what grave civility she declined a proposal which must have struck her as ludicrous, in the following letter:” —

MY DEAR SIR, — I am honoured by the Prince's thanks, and very much obliged to yourself for the kind manner in which you mention the work. I have also to acknowledge a former letter forwarded to me from Hans Place. I assure you I felt very grateful for the friendly tenor of it, and hope my silence will have been considered, as it was truly meant, to proceed only from an unwillingness to tax your time with idle thanks. Under every interesting circumstance which your own talents and literary labours have placed you in, or the favour of the Regent bestowed, you have my best wishes. Your recent appointments I hope are a step to something still better. In my opinion, the service of a court can hardly be too well paid, for immense must be the sacrifice of time and feeling required by it.

You are very kind in your hints as to the sort of composition which might recommend me at present; and I am fully sensible that an historical romance,

founded on the House of Saxe-Cobourg, might be much more to the purpose of profit or popularity than such pictures of domestic life in country villages as I deal in. But I could no more write a romance than an epic poem. I could not sit seriously down to write a serious romance under any other motive than to save my life; and if it were indispensable for me to keep it up and never relax into laughing at myself or at other people, I am sure I should be hung before I had finished the first chapter. No, I must keep to my own style and go on in my own way; and though I may never succeed again in that, I am convinced that I should totally fail in any other.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Your very much obliged and sincere friend,

J. AUSTEN.

CHAWTON, near ALTON, April 1, 1816.

It is satisfactory to be able to add that this letter silenced, if it did not convince, the librarian of Carlton House, and that he offered no further suggestions.

While "Emma" was receiving its last corrections in the proof, its author had also been going carefully through the pages of "Mansfield Park," and making such changes as her critical sense dictated, returning it to Mr. Murray on December 11, "as ready for a second edition as I can make it," she tells him. No wonder that the weight of care and anxiety on her brother's behalf, coming at a period when necessity obliged her to spend long hours over the innumerable proof sheets of "Emma" and this final revision of "Mansfield Park," should have pressed heavily upon her.

There is no mention of her being out of health in these months, and it was not until the subsequent spring that she began visibly to decline ; but the burdens of the autumn had already done their fatal work upon her, though neither she nor her friends suspected it.

About the middle of December she returned to Chawton ; and the next intelligence we have of her is contained in a letter to her niece, Fanny, dated the 20th of the following February, in which she speaks of having been ill with rheumatism and tenderly nursed by her sister ; but in spite of this indisposition she was able to do some sisterly offices for the brother whose devoted nurse she had been a few months before, for she mentions having completed the marking of some of his shirts. In the next letter, dated March 13, is an item of importance as showing how persistent her literary labors were in the last years of her life in spite of many hindrances : —

"I *will* answer your kind questions more than you expect. 'Miss Catherine' is put upon the shelf for the present, and I do not know that she will ever come out ; but I have a something ready for publication which may perhaps appear about a twelvemonth hence. It is short, — about the length of 'Catherine.' This is for yourself alone."

Mr. Austen-Leigh in his biography makes no mention of "Catherine ;" and I am not aware that this reference to it appears to have been noticed by any writer upon Jane Austen. Its author proba-

bly never subjected it to revision, from the feeling that it was not up to the level of her other work, and took care that it should not be published. All that is known of it is what is contained in the passage quoted. The book was called "Catherine," and was short. It can hardly fail to have been better than "Lady Susan;" and I am led to wish that *this* and not "Lady Susan" had fallen into her nephew's hands when he decided to give to the world a hitherto unpublished story by his illustrious aunt.

The other work mentioned as "ready for publication" must have been the first draft of "Persuasion," though one is at a loss to know how she had found time to write it with all she had had to occupy her. The information that it might appear "about a twelvemonth hence" would seem to imply that she intended to extend and amplify it in the intervening time. Ten days later, however, she tells her niece, —

"Do not be surprised at finding Uncle Henry acquainted with my having another ready for publication. I could not say No when he asked me, but he knows nothing more of it. You will not like it, so you need not be impatient. You may *perhaps* like the heroine, as she is almost too good for me."

However nearly ready for the printer the book, if "Persuasion" be here meant, may have seemed to her at this time, she certainly soon altered her mind concerning it, either rewriting or very materially enlarging it, as we shall have occasion later to observe.

In this letter, which was written on the 23d of March, she confesses that she has "certainly not been well for many weeks." About a week ago, she adds, —

"I was very poorly. I have had a good deal of fever at times, and indifferent nights; but I am considerably better now, and am recovering my looks a little, which have been bad enough, — black and white and every wrong colour. I must not depend upon being ever very blooming again. Sickness is a dangerous indulgence at my time of life."

It was while her health was thus undermined that the bank in which Henry Austen had for some time been a partner failed, involving him and many of the members of the Austen kindred in serious loss. This trouble was very greatly felt by Jane, who not far from this time was visiting her friends the Fowles in Berkshire. She had by no means recovered from the strain of the previous autumn, as we have just seen, and was consequently less able to bear the trial than the others of the family. Her Berkshire friends perceived a great change in her appearance; and it became very evident to all who saw her that she was certainly very far from well. Still she was busy at her little mahogany desk a good deal of the time, for she was at work upon "*Persuasion*," which was undergoing revision or rewriting, if we assume this to have been the work to which she alludes in March; and on July 16 she brought it to its first conclusion.

For a time in the spring her usual cheerfulness

deserted her. The winter's rheumatism had been followed, as we have already seen, by the bilious fever, and this in turn by the family troubles; and writing of all this to her brother Charles, then living in Keppel Street in London, she says: "I live upstairs for the present, and am coddled. I am the only one of the party who has been so silly, but a weak body must excuse weak nerves."

To another correspondent she remarks, "I am getting too near complaint; it has been the appointment of God, however secondary causes may have operated."

The depression which she felt was a perfectly natural one; and the only wonder is that considering all the circumstances which caused it, it was not only greater than it was, but more prolonged. The feeling never seems to have become so strong as to deserve the name of despondency, and was not of long duration. When the temporary cloud had lifted, she was as cheerful as ever.

Early in the spring a donkey-carriage was obtained for her benefit; and on the 23d of March she writes to her niece Fanny in regard to it:

"I took my first ride yesterday, and liked it very much. I went up Mounter's Lane and round by where the new cottages are to be, and found the exercise and everything very pleasant; and I had the advantage of agreeable companions, as At. Cass. and Edward walked by my side."

Then follows the little touch of sisterly affection which means so much: "At. Cass. is such an excellent nurse, so assiduous and unwearyed!"

As soon as her spirits had recovered their usual tone, manifold interests occupied her thoughts as usual ; and early in July she was writing in animated fashion to the nephew who became her biographer, and who was now near the end of his last year at Winchester College. The lad, having gone to his home at Steventon for a few days, had after dating his letter from there incautiously added that he was at home ; and his aunt rallies him upon his superfluity of detail : —

"I am glad you recollected to mention your being come home. My heart began to sink within me when I had got so far through your letter without its being mentioned. I was dreadfully afraid that you might be detained at Winchester by severe illness, confined to your bed perhaps, and quite unable to hold a pen, and only dating from Steventon in order, with a mistaken sort of tenderness, to deceive me. But now I have no doubt of your being at home. I am sure you would not say it unless it actually were so."

This was written on the 9th of July, and nine days later the first ending of "*Persuasion*" was reached. Always extremely critical in regard to the quality and finish of her work, the success of each book only impelled her to use greater care in the preparation of the next ; and on this occasion she was more than usually dissatisfied with her writing. The last chapter she felt to be a rather tame conclusion to what immediately preceded it ; and a brief season of depression was the consequence. One morning, however, after having gone

to bed the evening previous in what were for her unusually low spirits, she set at work with all the old vigor; and though she could necessarily write but little at a time, she had by the middle of August concluded "Persuasion" in a manner which satisfied her own exacting literary sense, as it has satisfied the demands of every critic since then.

But it is far from easy to understand how she was able to accomplish all that she did in the last year that she was able to write. While "Persuasion" was in hand she had been obliged to give up, one after another, many of her cherished habits. She was always extremely fond of walking; but as summer came on, the walks grew shorter, and at last ceased altogether. Then recourse was had to the donkey-carriage purchased at the time of her illness in the spring. In the letter from which the last quotation was made, she mentions starting for Farrington — a village between Chawton and Selborne — in this vehicle, but gives no hint of how distasteful to her must have been such a conveyance when contrasted with her former active method of taking the air. Withindoors of course she could do less and less in addition to her writing; and she had the pain of seeing her sister assume one by one the household duties which had been her own so long, fearing, as she must have begun to fear, that she would never again be strong enough to share Cassandra's cares as she had done since they were children. For a part of every day it became a habit with her now to lie down; and

lest she might deprive her aged mother from using the one sofa there was space for in the family room, she improvised for herself a couch of chairs, which it suited her to say was more comfortable for her than the sofa would have been. That this was not and could not have been strictly true will quickly enough be perceived; but what can one do except to forgive the thoughtful deception and love her the better for it? It had always been her custom to pursue her literary tasks in the family sitting-room; and as she once explained to a small niece who refused to be satisfied with anything but definite answers to her questions, if she had shown a desire to use the sofa in the intervals of her work her mother might not have felt willing to use it also as much as she needed to do. Perhaps Mrs. Austen, who was by no means wanting in perception, may have seen through her daughter's loving subterfuge. I like to think that she did, and that she was large-minded enough to respect in silence the unselfishness of a spirit which even in illness could yet prefer another's comfort to her own.

"Persuasion" at last finished to her mind, Jane apparently regained some of her former degree of health. She still continued to spend a portion of every day at her writing-desk, but mainly in attending to her correspondence, which had not been wholly neglected even when she was engaged upon her novel during most of the hours in which she was able to write. Not far from this time she paid several short visits with her sister Cassandra,

one of which was to her brother James and his family at Steventon. It was destined to be the last time she was ever to see the home of her childhood; and though she may have had some presentiment of the fact, certainly none of her family foresaw it. In September Cassandra was staying for a short time at Cheltenham; and on the 8th Jane wrote to her what was probably the last letter the other ever received from her, since after that date the two were not separated.

In response to her sister's inquiries Jane says, "Thank you, my back has given me scarcely any pain for many days. I have an idea that the agitation does it as much harm as fatigue, and that I was ill at the time of your going from the very circumstance of your going," — a touching confession, which shows how entire was now the dependence of the younger upon the older sister.

She was certainly much better at this time than she had been in the spring, as is evidenced in her mention of what she was able to accomplish. The letter tells of her going to Alton on one occasion and walking home by moonlight. Even supposing her to have walked but one way and to have gone only to the nearest part of Alton, the effort involved a walk of at least a mile; company easily tired her, however, and much as she enjoyed seeing her brothers, Edward and Frank, their visits began to weary her, leaving her almost glad when they were gone, and desirous of "exemption from the thought and contrivancy which any sort of

company gives. I often wonder how you can find time for what you do in addition to the care of the house."

In one of the closing paragraphs of the letter her dislike to the then prevalent school of churchmanship finds an utterance which is interesting to us as revealing by inference the nature of her religious preferences: "We do not much like Mr. Cooper's new sermons. They are fuller of regeneration and conversion than ever, with the addition of his zeal in the cause of the Bible Society."

How the remainder of the autumn was spent by her we do not know; but that it was a period of comparative comfort may be surmised from the fact that in January she speaks of having gained in strength. The gain was delusive, to be sure, but to all appearance it may have been real enough.

After the failure of the bank the versatile and sanguine Henry Austen concluded to adopt the profession of his father and eldest brother; and Jane refers to this in a letter to her nephew Edward Austen, written on the 16th of December. After congratulating the lad upon having left the college at Winchester for the university at Oxford, she observes, "Your uncle Henry writes very superior sermons. You and I must try to get hold of one or two, and put them into our novels."

This nephew too, we thus learn, was addicted to writing fiction; but like his sister Anna's efforts in the same field, his own probably came to nothing,

for all we hear of them in his biography of his aunt is merely this allusion in her letter to him.

Regarding the sermons she continues, —

“ It would be a fine help to a volume ; and we could make our heroine read it aloud on a Sunday evening, just as well as Isabella Wardour in the ‘ Antiquary ’ is made to read the ‘ History of the Hartz Demon ’ in the ruins of St. Ruth, though I believe upon recollection Lovell is the reader. By the bye, my dear E., I am quite concerned for the loss your mother mentions in her letter. Two chapters and a half to be missing is monstrous ! It is well that I have not been at Steventon lately, and therefore cannot be suspected of purloining them ; two strong twigs and a half towards a nest of my own would have been something. I do not think, however, that any theft of that sort would be really very useful to me. What should I do with your strong, manly sketches, full of variety and glow ? How could I possibly join them on to the little bit (two inches wide) of ivory on which I work with so fine a brush as produces little effect after much labor ? ”

In all probability Jane did not prophesy to herself that her brilliant, disappointing, but wholly lovable brother would achieve a great amount of success in his new and sacred profession, and as a matter of fact he was actively engaged in it but two or three years, or while he held the living of Steventon after the death of his brother James and until his nephew William Knight was old enough to take it ; but she could and did appreciate his gifts as a sermonizer, in which capacity he may very possibly have surpassed his brother James.

In a letter to her friend Miss Bigg, dated Jan. 24, 1817, we note one more reference to her brother Henry as a clergyman:—

“Our own new clergyman is expected here very soon, perhaps in time to assist Mr. Papillon on Sunday. I shall be very glad when the first hearing is over. It will be a nervous hour for our pew, though we hear that he acquits himself with as much ease and collectedness as if he had been used to it all his life.”

Her own bit of literary self-description has been often quoted apart from its context; but I think it gains in force when contrasted with her generous approval of her nephew's work. She recognized very fully the limits of her art, but possibly did not so readily appreciate what that “fine brush” of hers was actually accomplishing within those limits.

In this letter of January 24 occurs a reference to a poem of Southey she was reading at the time, which if for no other reason is of interest because it is the last book which she mentions as having read. It had been in print but a few months at this time.

“We have been reading ‘The Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo,’ and generally with much approbation. Nothing will please all the world, you know; but parts of it suit me better than much that he has written before. The opening — *the proem*, I believe he calls it — is very beautiful. Poor man! one cannot but grieve for the loss of the son so fondly described.”

Some portion of the last months of 1816 was no doubt devoted by her to preparing "Persuasion" for the press; and then upon the 27th of January, according to the date she placed upon her manuscript, she began a new novel upon which she worked industriously for seven weeks, the last lines being written on the 17th of March. In that time twelve chapters were written, — an extraordinary amount of work when her physical condition is considered. Although she had written to one of her nieces about the period when the task was begun in so hopeful a strain as this, "I feel myself getting stronger than I was, and can so perfectly walk *to* Alton, *or* back again without fatigue, that I hope to be able to do *both* when summer comes," she must have been much weaker in reality than she thought herself. As spring came on, the illusory strength of the winter melted away with the snow. "The chief part of this manuscript," says her nephew, "is written in her usual firm, neat hand, but some of the later pages seem to have been first traced in pencil, probably when she was too weak to sit at her desk, and written over in ink afterwards."

There is an indescribable pathos of suggestion in these words of his. Now that life was so nearly over for her she experienced more strongly than she had ever done the impulse to write, feeling, it may have been, as each day brought her nearer to the unseen, a sense within herself of powers greater than had yet been fully shown. And it was all in

vain. One by one the days passed, each as it went leaving her perceptibly weaker and stealing from her fingers a little of their pliant strength, till the firm, clear writing grew by degrees tremulous and irregular, and the pen dropped at last from the hand that could no longer hold it. It must have been a bitter moment when the realization came to her, as it must assuredly have one day come, that it was all for nothing that she had been working, that the patient careful labor of those long weeks would never give delight to the world like the works which had gone before it, and that always and forever —

“The unfinished window in Aladdin’s tower
Unfinished must remain.”

I cannot think, as some persons have done, that this fragment of a story upon which her latest strength was expended is of but little worth. To my mind it is full of the charm which attaches to all her writing. But I will not undertake its defence. It is but an unrevised fragment merely, and to criticise it in that condition were the height of unfairness. It is the very last work outlined by a woman of superlative talent, or, shall we not say, genius? The artist’s plan is undefined; the background is vague and uncertain, and the purpose of many lines remains a mystery never to be unfolded. But it *is* an artist’s work, left just as the artist turned from it one day to answer a sudden summons, and as such should be sacred from all irreverent touch.

X.

LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH.

WHEN the pen was finally laid aside, the Austen family recognized, what seemingly they had not done previously, that the beloved daughter and sister was so ill as to justify the gravest apprehensions. So long as she could pay short visits to her friends, or take her rides in the donkey-carriage, or, failing strength for these things, could sit and write a short time each day, they had not felt that she was greatly out of health. But the pen laid down, and the chair pushed aside from the little mahogany desk, made her actual condition no longer a matter of doubt to any of them. Her niece Caroline, the twelve-year-old daughter of James Austen, was to have paid a visit at her grandmother's near the beginning of April; but Aunt Jane was then too feeble to have company in the house, and Caroline went to the house of her sister, Mrs. Anna Lefroy, which was not far away.

“The next day,” writes the niece, “we walked over to Chawton to make enquiries after our aunt. She was then keeping her room, but said she would see us, and we went up to her. She was in her dressing-

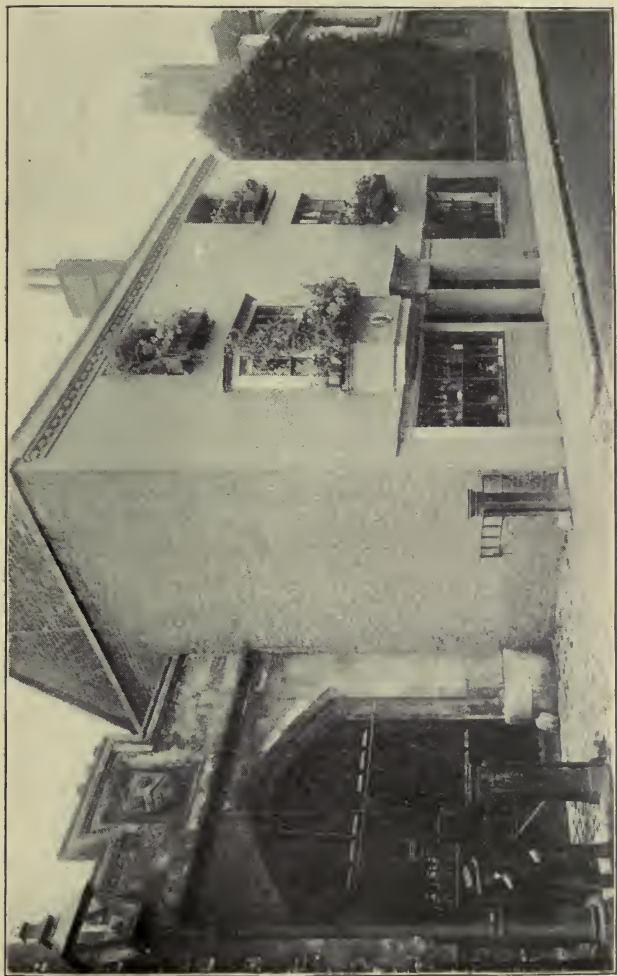
gown, and was sitting quite like an invalid in an arm-chair; but she got up and kindly greeted us, and then pointing to seats which had been arranged for us by the fire, she said, 'There is a chair for the married lady, and a little stool for you, Caroline.' It is strange, but these trifling words were the last of hers that I can remember, for I retain no recollection of what was said by any one in the conversation that ensued. I was struck by the alteration in herself. She was very pale; her voice was weak and low; and there was about her a general appearance of debility and suffering; but I have been told that she never had much acute pain. She was not equal to the exertion of talking to us, and our visit to the sick-room was a very short one, Aunt Cassandra soon taking us away."

The month of April passed, and May followed, but brought with it little change for the better in the invalid's condition; and on the 24th, in the company of her sister and her brother Henry, she went to Winchester to be under the care of a noted physician of that town, Mr. Lyford. He belonged to a family of medical men, and his skill was much esteemed beyond the borders of Hampshire, London physicians having expressed much confidence in him. From the first he appears to have had, according to Mr. Austen-Leigh, but slight hope of effecting his patient's permanent cure; but he spoke cheerfully, thinking perhaps that with care so valuable a life might be prolonged for a number of months at least.

Along the southern wall of the Close at Winchester is a narrow thoroughfare called College

Street, which extends easterly from Kingsgate Street to a little beyond a clear, rapidly flowing branch of the Itchen, near which it turns abruptly to the south, skirting the high, walled garden of the warden of the college. On the left hand, between the roadway and the wall of the Close, are a few houses and some narrow gardens; and on the right the street is lined with plain brick dwellings for a quarter of its length, and for the remainder by the long frontage of the outer buildings belonging to the ancient College of William of Wykeham. The last of these houses to the right, which adjoins the Commoners' entrance to the college, was then owned and occupied by a Mrs. David, — a respectable woman in middle life who let a portion of her house to lodgers. After her death in 1843 the property passed to her nephew and thence to his son, Mr. La Croix, now an elderly man, whose skill as a pastry-cook has been tested by generation after generation of William of Wykeham's sons.

It was in this building, now occupied by the estimable Mr. La Croix, that Cassandra Austen had engaged lodgings for her sister and herself, the locality being chosen, very likely, from its close vicinity to the home of their friends Mrs. Heathcote and her sister, Miss Bigg, who lived in one of the canon's houses in the Close. A very short walk under little St. Swithin's Church over the Kingsgate and then across the Close, after passing its venerable seldom-closed gates, was all



THE HOUSE IN COLLEGE STREET, WINCHESTER, WHERE JANE AUSTEN DIED.

the journey required for Cassandra to take to summon their aid at any time. To these friends the sisters owed many a thoughtful attention, receiving not only the pleasure of their society, but such additions to their lodging-house comforts as would naturally suggest themselves to lifelong friends to furnish. The removal from Chawton to Winchester had taken place on Saturday, and on the Tuesday succeeding Jane wrote to the nephew last mentioned the following note, almost the latest piece of her writing which we possess:—

MRS. DAVID'S, COLLEGE ST., WINTON,
Tuesday, May 27.

There is no better way, my dearest E., of thanking you for your affectionate concern for me during my illness than my telling you myself, as soon as possible, that I continue to get better. I will not boast of my handwriting; neither that nor my face have yet recovered their proper beauty, but in other respects I gain very fast. I am now out of bed from 9 in the morning to 10 at night: upon the sofa, it is true, but I eat my meals with aunt Cassandra in a rational way, and can employ myself, and walk from one room to another. Mr. Lyford says he will cure me; and if he fails, I shall draw up a memorial and lay it before the Dean and Chapter, and have no doubt of redress from that pious, learned, and disinterested body. Our lodgings are very comfortable. We have a neat little drawing-room with a bow-window overlooking Dr. Gabell's garden. Thanks to the kindness of your father and mother in sending me their carriage, my journey hither on Saturday was performed with very little fatigue, and had it been a fine day, I think I

should have felt none ; but it distressed me to see uncle Henry and Wm. Knight, who kindly attended us on horseback, riding in the rain almost the whole way. We expect a visit from them to-morrow, and hope they will stay the night ; and on Thursday, which is a confirmation and a holiday, we are to get Charles out to breakfast. We have had but one visit from *him*, poor fellow, as he is in sick-room ; but he hopes to be out to-night. We see Mrs. Heathcote every day, and William is to call upon us soon. God bless you, my dear E. ! If ever you are ill, may you be as tenderly nursed as I have been. May the same blessed alleviations of anxious, sympathizing friends be yours ; and may you possess, as I dare say you will, the greatest blessing of all in the consciousness of not being unworthy of their love. *I* could not feel this.

Your very affec^t Aunt,

J. A.

The letter here transcribed shows more clearly and simply than the words of any biographer could do the solicitous, grateful, loving nature of the one who wrote it. She had room for an anxious thought for those who might be enduring discomfort for her sake, even while she was undergoing the fatigues of a long carriage journey, — fatigues which, however she might make light of them, could not but be considerable to one as ill as she must then have been. But then and always she experienced the deepest gratitude for all that was done for her. It was no forced humility of spirit which led her at this time to esteem herself unworthy of all the kindness she received, but the sincere utterance of a soul that so far from thinking of itself more

highly than it ought to think, had invariably preferred another's comfort to its own.

One afternoon of June, 1889, in the company of the Dean¹ who at present rules so ably over the grey precincts of Winchester Cathedral, I entered the old house in College Street which Jane Austen had found so comfortable in the last weeks of her life. The Dean having explained our wishes to the owner, the latter readily admitted us up a rather dark stair possessing a landing and a turn, and into the "neat little drawing-room" mentioned in the letter, from the bow-window of which flowers and vines overhang the entrance to the pastry-cook shop below. It is a small room, lighted only by the bow-window, and connecting by a passage-way with other apartments in the rear. Over the way there was a bit of garden to be seen, and beyond and above the leafage of the Close the south transept gable and the tower of the cathedral.

It was a pleasant corner of the beautiful old city, — not an absolutely still one, for the voices of the young Wykehamists now and again echoed along the street, but a peaceful spot nevertheless, with just enough of life stirring within it to please one whose hold on existence, but not her kindly interest in many of its aspects, was fast loosening. As we sat in the little room with curious time-worn paper on the walls, from which some old views of Paris were suspended, the seventy-two years since the Austens were there seemed to fade into the

¹ The Very Reverend G. W. Kitchin, now (1896) Dean of Durham.

past, and show us the patient, gentle invalid on the sofa in the corner, and close beside her Cassandra Austen, — that “dearest sister,” that “tender, watchful, indefatigable nurse.”

It was transitory enough, like most illusions; but as we walked thoughtfully back through College and St. Swithin streets to where the sharply pointed arches of the Deanery entrance revealed their graceful outlines across the greensward of the Close, we talked, as was natural, of little else than the gifted woman in whose very presence we had seemed to be that summer day.

The improvement in her condition noted by Jane in her letter, which was probably owing as much as anything to the change of air and scene incident upon the removal from Chawton to Winchester, lasted but a very short time; for on June 14, a little over two weeks later, her niece Fanny sadly records in her diary the latest news from Winchester to this effect, “A sad account of my poor dear aunt Jane.” Four days after the diary contains this entry, “Another hopeless account from Winchester;” and again on June 27 the words, “Much the same account of dear aunt Jane.”

By this time the circle of friends to whom Jane Austen was so dear had of course ceased to entertain hope of her recovery, but they may not have thought the end so near as it proved to be. Some one whom she loved was always with her in these last days. Cassandra, the devoted sister, seldom

left her side, and her ministrations were shared by her sister-in-law, Mrs. James Austen. Henry and James Austen came to Winchester every few days to see their sister; while the two friends from the Close daily passed along College Street to the Austen lodgings at Mrs. David's. Everything that the thoughtful love of those about her could suggest to add to her comfort was ungrudgingly supplied; and that she was fully sensible of the tender solicitude of her friends appears in almost the last lines she ever wrote: —

“My dearest sister, my tender, watchful, indefatigable nurse, has not been made ill by her exertions. As to what I owe her, and the anxious affection of all my beloved family on this occasion, I can only cry over it, and pray God to bless them more and more.”

The natural sweetness of her disposition never forsook her, even in the weakness of illness. Sometimes when she was feeling momentarily better her former liveliness returned; and some amusing, playful expression of hers would bring smiles to the anxious faces of the friends about her.

Ere June was ended she recognized her condition fully, but accepted the knowledge calmly, notwithstanding that life had been very sweet to her, shielded as she had always been from much contact with its ruder experiences, while the events of the last few years had been of such a character as to incline her to wish to live to enjoy for a longer time the fame that had dawned across them. But, as her nephew observes, —

“Her life had been passed in the performance of home duties, and the cultivation of domestic affections, without any self-seeking or craving after applause. She had always sought, as it were by instinct, to promote the happiness of all who came within her influence; and doubtless she had her reward in the peace of mind which was granted her in her last days.”

At length there came a day when she fancied the end was close at hand; and turning from one to another of the friends beside her, she said some gentle word of parting to each, thanking especially the sister-in-law who had borne with Cassandra the more arduous cares of nursing and attendance, adding in the sweet tones which never failed her, “You have always been a kind sister to me, Mary.”

But after this there seemed to be a pause in the progress of the disease; and for two or three weeks she lingered in a state which implied the existence of but little pain, and that permitted her to talk with her attendants and enjoy their presence. Then the complaint returned or took on another phase; and on the evening of the 17th of July, after a half-hour of suffering, she sank into that unconsciousness which passed just as another day was breaking into that broader existence “whose portal we call death.”

To the aged mother in the cottage at Chawton there came, a few hours later, the news which for weeks she had been expecting yet dreading to hear. What such a loss as hers must have been

we can understand from what we know of the one for whom she mourned. The death of her husband had been the one great anguish of her life till now at nearly eighty she had the pain of losing the most gifted of all her seven children.

To Jane's beloved niece at Godmersham the latter's father wrote from Winchester at once, well knowing how sharp a sorrow his words would carry to his daughter, who was so like the sister he had lost, and who had loved her so well. It was on Friday morning that Jane Austen died; and on Sunday the sister, sitting in the little room beside the silent form of the one who had been the almost idolized companion of a whole life, wrote to her niece Fanny the touching letter that follows, — a letter full of the details which the other would wish to know, but the penning of which must have cost the writer many tears: —

WINCHESTER, Sunday.

MY DEAREST FANNY, — Doubly dear to me now for her dear sake whom we have lost. She did love you most sincerely; and never shall I forget the proofs of love you gave her during her illness, in writing those kind, amusing letters, at a time when I know your feelings would have dictated so different a style. Take the only reward I can give you, in the assurance that your benevolent purpose *was* answered; you *did* contribute to her enjoyment.

Even your last letter afforded her pleasure. I merely cut the seal and gave it to her; she opened it and read it herself. Afterwards she gave it to me to read, and then talked to me a little, and not uncheer-

fully, of its contents; but there was then a languor about her which prevented her taking the same interest in anything she had been used to do.

Since Tuesday evening, when her complaint returned, there was a visible change: she slept more and much more comfortably; indeed, during the last eight-and-forty hours she was more asleep than awake. Her looks altered and fell away, but I perceived no material diminution of strength; and though I was then hopeless of a recovery, I had no suspicion how rapidly my loss was approaching.

I *have* lost a treasure, — such a sister, such a friend as never can have been surpassed. She was the sun of my life, the gilder of every pleasure, the soother of every sorrow; I had not a thought concealed from her; and it is as if I had lost a part of myself. I loved her only too well, — not better than she deserved, but I am conscious that my affection for her made me sometimes unjust to and negligent of others; and I can acknowledge, more than as a general principle, the justice of the Hand which struck the blow.

You know me too well to be at all afraid that I should suffer materially from my feelings. I am perfectly conscious of the extent of my irreparable loss; but I am not at all overpowered, and very little indisposed, nothing but what a short time, with rest and change of air, will remove. I thank God that I was enabled to attend her to the last, and amongst my many causes of self-reproach I have not to add any wilful neglect of her comfort.

She felt herself to be dying about half an hour before she became tranquil and apparently unconscious. During that half-hour was her struggle, poor soul! She said she could not tell us what she suffered, though she complained of little fixed pain. When I asked her if there was anything she wanted,

her answer was she wanted nothing but death; and some of her words were, "God grant me patience! Pray for me, oh, pray for me!" Her voice was affected, but as long as she spoke she was intelligible.

I hope I do not break your heart, my dearest Fanny, by these particulars; I mean to afford you gratification while I am relieving my own feelings. I could not write so to anybody else; indeed, you are the only person I have written to at all, excepting your grandmamma, — it was to her, not your Uncle Charles, I wrote on Friday.

Immediately after dinner on Thursday I went into the town to do an errand which your dear aunt was anxious about. I returned about a quarter before six, and found her recovering from faintness and oppression. She got so well as to give me a minute account of her seizure; and when the clock struck six she was talking quietly to me.

I cannot say how soon afterwards she was seized again with the same faintness, which was followed by the sufferings she could not describe; but Mr. Lyford had been sent for, had applied something to give her ease, and she was in a state of quiet insensibility by seven o'clock at the latest. From that time till half-past four, when she ceased to breathe, she scarcely moved a limb; so that we have every reason to think, with gratitude to the Almighty, that her sufferings were over. A slight motion of the head with every breath remained till almost the last. I sat close to her, with a pillow in my lap to assist in supporting her head, which was almost off the bed, for six hours; fatigue made me then resign my place to Mrs. J. A. for two hours and a half, when I took it again, and in about an hour more she breathed her last. I was able to close her eyes myself; and it was a great gratification to me to render her those last services. There

was nothing convulsed which gave the idea of pain in her look; on the contrary, but for the continual motion of the head she gave one the idea of a beautiful statue. And even now, in her coffin, there is such a sweet, serene air over her countenance as is quite pleasant to contemplate.

This day, my dearest, Fanny, you have had the melancholy intelligence, and I know you will suffer severely; but I likewise know that you will apply to the fountain-head for consolation, and that our merciful God is never deaf to such prayers as you will offer.

The last sad ceremony is to take place on Thursday morning; her dear remains are to be deposited in the cathedral. It is a satisfaction to me to think that they are to lie in a building she admired so much; her precious soul, I presume to hope, reposes in a far superior mansion. May mine one day be reunited to it.

Your dear papa, your Uncle Henry, and Frank and Edwd. Austen,¹ instead of his father, will attend. I hope they will none of them suffer lastingly from their pious exertions. The ceremony must be over before ten o'clock, as the cathedral service begins at that hour, so that we shall be at home early in the day, for there will be nothing to keep us here afterwards. . . . I am, my dearest Fanny,

Most affectionately Yours,

CASS. ELIZ. AUSTEN.

On Thursday, July 24, not far from nine in the morning, a small company of the male members of the Austen kindred moved slowly forth from the

¹ Known to literature as the Reverend Austen-Leigh. He was the son of Reverend James Austen, who was not well enough to be present.

house on College Street, taking with them all that remained on earth of the bright, unselfish woman, the tender sister, the loving aunt, of whose genius they had all been so justly proud. Very quietly the necessary movements were made, so that the sister sitting in her desolation in the room above should hear no jarring sound; and "had I not been upon the listen," so she tells us, "I should not have known when they left the house."

From the bow-window of her room Cassandra watched the mournful company till in a few moments it had passed from sight around the corner of Kingsgate Street; but in thought she still followed it through the low, dark arches of the Kingsgate, till it entered, at the foot of St. Swithin Street, a few steps farther, the shady precincts of the Close, and wound along past the corners of the choristers' school and then of the Deanery opposite, past the opening of the long "dark cloister," till it paused before the side door in the south aisle of the cathedral. It was but a brief journey, this sad one she was following step by step while she sat so quietly in the lonely apartment out of which had gone all that she most cared for. Sitting there with her grief, she could nevertheless see her brothers pass into the mighty cathedral, cross the long-drawn nave, the most majestic in all England, and pause once more, this time before the spot in the north aisle where they were to leave the dust of their sister to mingle with the dust of kings and queens, of prelates and of warriors; but not one of

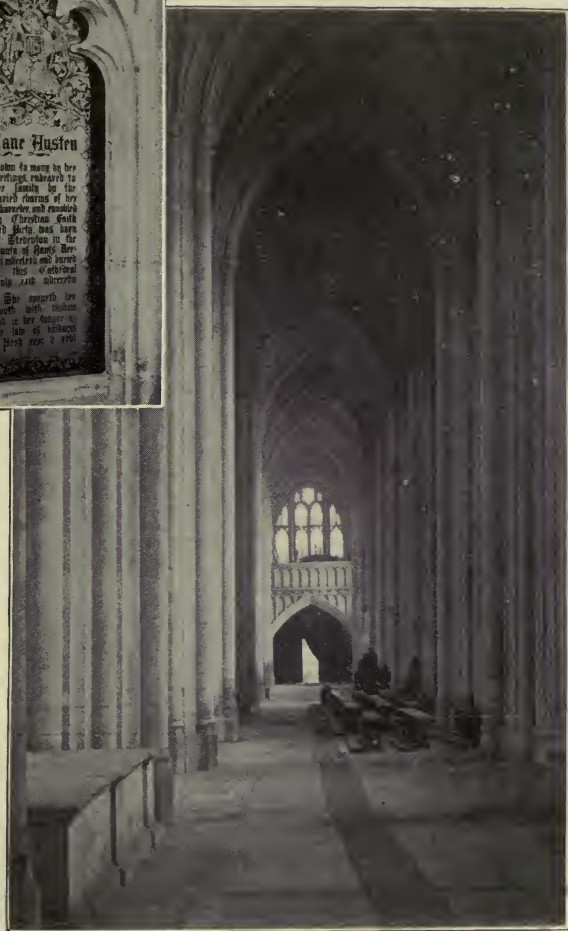
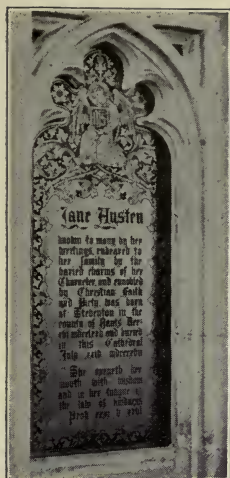
all that host of buried greatness had lived a fairer life or left a sweeter memory than had her sister and theirs.

The service ended, the grave filled up, and the temporary slab which covered it fitted into its place in the floor of the aisle,¹ the brothers went their way as the bells of the cathedral began ringing for morning prayer. A few moments after, the white-robed singing boys and vicars-choral moved choirwards from the south transept, followed by the vergers and the surpliced canons; and the organ sent its waves of sound surging along the vaulted roof. These, too, after a little went their way; the great cathedral was left to the vergers and the Saint Cross bedesmen to care for, the sunlight streamed in gloriously through the long range of the clerestory windows,

“And merry was the world though she was dead.”

¹ The precise locality of the gravestone is in the pavement of the fifth bay of the north aisle, counting from the west. It is a slab of black marble with the following inscription:—

“In memory of JANE AUSTEN, youngest daughter of the late Revd. George Austen, formerly Rector of Steventon in this County. She departed this life on July 18, 1817, aged 41, after a long illness, supported with the patience and hope of a Christian. The benevolence of her heart, the sweetness of her temper, and the extraordinary endowments of her mind, obtained the regard of all who knew her, and the warmest love of her immediate connexions. Their grief is in proportion to their affection; they know their loss to be irreparable, but in their deepest affliction they are consoled by a firm, though humble, hope that her charity, devotion, faith and purity have rendered her soul acceptable in the sight of her Redeemer.”



WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL, NORTH AISLE, LOOKING WEST.

THE SLAB ABOVE THE GRAVE OF MISS AUSTEN IS AT THE END OF THE MATTING SHOWN IN THE ILLUSTRATION.

XI.

JANE'S BROTHERS AND SISTER.

SAID the youngest mourner in the cathedral on that 24th of July, 1817, — the nephew who in his old age wrote so tenderly of the beloved aunt of his boyhood, and whose pious care placed in the wall of the north aisle the memorial brass which bears her name, —

“ Her brothers went back sorrowing to their several homes. They were very fond and very proud of her. They were attached to her by her talents, her virtues, and her engaging manners; and each loved afterwards to fancy a resemblance in some niece or daughter of his own to the dear sister Jane whose perfect equal they yet never expected to see.”

Her death was the first break in the circle of brothers and sisters; and nearly two years and a half later a second was caused by the death of the Reverend James Austen at Steventon, on Dec. 13, 1819. In the chancel of the church of St. Nicholas at Steventon, of which he had been rector since the resignation of his father in 1801, is a mural tablet¹ to his memory, and close at

¹ “ To the memory of Rev. James Austen who succeeded his father as Rector of this Parish, and died Dec. 13th 1819, aged 53 years.”

hand, in the small but sunny churchyard, is his tomb. He was twice married, — the first time to Anne Mathew, whose only child, Anna, married, as we have already ascertained, the younger son of Jane's early friend, Mrs. Lefroy of Ashe. His two children by his second wife, Mary Lloyd, — the "Mary" to whom Jane expressed so much gratitude in her last days, — were James Edward, the same who afterward added the name of Leigh to his own, and Caroline, who died unmarried in 1880.

Mrs. George Austen, who at the time of her daughter's death was seventy-eight years old, lived on quietly in the cottage at Chawton for several years after the loss of her eldest son. These were years of almost constant pain, which she bore, however, with patience and cheerfulness. To her nephew Edward she once remarked during one of his visits to her: "Ah, my dear, you find me just where you left me, on the sofa. I sometimes think God Almighty must have forgotten me; but I dare say He will come for me in His own good time." The ending she had longed for came in January, 1827, at the cottage in Chawton; and the small churchyard about Chawton Church in her great-grandson's park contains her tomb.

There was no one left at the cottage now to need a daughter's nor a sister's care; and Cassandra, whose home it still continued to be, spent much of her time with the families of her brothers. Her nephew, Edward Knight, after his marriage made Chawton House his home; and she naturally

passed a large part of her time in his family, being especially fond of his second wife ; for like all his uncles and many of his cousins, he was twice married. She made, however, frequent trips to Godmersham and Steventon ; and her death occurred while she was visiting her brother, Admiral Francis Austen, K. C. B., whose home was at Portsdown Lodge near Portsmouth. She was buried beside her mother in Chawton Churchyard ; and when I visited her grave in July of 1889, a thrifty young yew which grew close beside it almost hid from sight the following inscription upon the stone at its head : —

“ In Memory of Cassandra Elizabeth Austen who died the 22d of March 1845. Aged 72.”

Not many years ago a fire destroyed the nave of Chawton Church, since rebuilt, but happily spared the ivy-covered chancel, the interior walls of which bear tablets in remembrance of Mrs. Austen and her older daughter. On the memorial to the latter are the words : —

“ In Memory of Cassandra Elizabeth Austen, daughter of the Reverend George Austen, Rector of Steventon in this county. Died 22d of March, 1845. Aged 72.

“ Being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. — Rom. v. 1.”

A fair knowledge of what Cassandra Austen was may be gleaned to some extent from the foregoing

pages. That hers was a character well worthy of the sisterly adoration of a woman like Jane Austen may not be doubted. With Jane she shared in the affectionate esteem of all her brothers, and in the reverent affection of their many nephews and nieces. After the deaths of her beloved sister and aged mother her life continued to be an active, busy one ; for though her own household cares may not have been very great, yet in the homes of her brothers and their children her counsel and services were constantly in demand. The great sorrow of her lifetime was probably not far removed from the surface of her thoughts at any after period. Soon after Jane's death she wrote to her niece Fanny : —

“ I get out of doors a good deal, and am able to employ myself. Of course those employments suit me best which leave me most at leisure to think of her I have lost, and I do think of her in every variety of circumstance. . . . I know the time must come when my mind will be less engrossed by her idea, but I do not like to think of it.”

Hers was too healthy a mind to dwell upon the past to the exclusion of the present ; and when the first sharpness of loss had gone, and her sorrow had passed from anguished pain into softened grief, she took up the plain details of common life with the gentle cheerfulness of her race. It had not been her first great trial, this parting with her sister. Long ago, in the old days at Steventon, fully twenty years before, she had met and become

deeply attached to a young clergyman ; and their engagement was favorably regarded by their relatives. Her lover was the friend of a young nobleman, with whom he went to India as chaplain to the other's regiment. While in India he sickened and died of yellow fever, to the great grief of the young peer, who declared that had he known of the engagement, he should not have encouraged his friend to encounter the risks of a tropical climate.

To Cassandra the shock of his death was a most severe one ; and the entire household shared her grief and gave her their tenderest pity. Jane's affectionate sympathy was of the utmost value to the older sister at this epoch, and strengthened the tie between them, which never had been a weak one. The love of her sister did all that human affection could do to supply the place of what was lost from Cassandra's life, but —

“ Life is love, and love is life, be sure !

And once loved, always must that love be strong.”

Her grandnephew, Lord Brabourne, who was a lad of fifteen at the time of his aunt Cassandra's death, well remembers her visits to Godmersham in his boyish days. She was an old lady by that time, with bright apple-red cheeks like her brother Edward's, giving a fine healthy tone of color to her face. She was a high favorite with her grandnephews and grandnieces, of whom she had many ; and after the lapse of five and forty years they

remember their great-aunt Cassandra as invariably winning and agreeable.

Henry Thomas Austen, whom I cannot but accuse as the remote though unwitting cause of his sister Jane's death, went to Berlin the year following that event in the capacity of chaplain. The death of his brother James was the occasion of his return to England at the close of 1819; and he succeeded him as rector of Steventon. In 1820 he married for the second time, and in 1822 resigned the living which had been filled by an Austen so long, in favor of his nephew, William Knight, who retained it till his own death in 1873. This appears to have been the only church preferment held by Henry Austen, who was no more persistent in this profession than in any other, and who lacked throughout his long life of almost eighty years that mysterious gift which goes by the name of "faculty." It was a disappointing, unsatisfactory life to those to whom he was dear, but probably not to himself, for he seemingly extracted a fair amount of comfort and happiness from it. He died at Tunbridge Wells in 1850, leaving no children.

The youngest of the Austen brothers, Admiral Charles Austen, was much less often in the company of his relatives than the others, being absent from England on many long cruises in the royal service, — one of these, indeed, lasting for seven years. He commanded the "Bellerophon" at the bombardment of St. Jean d'Acre in 1840, and ten years

later was commander-in-chief of the British naval forces in the East Indian and Chinese waters. He never returned to England after this, and died of cholera on board his flagship in the Irawaddy in the year 1852, when he had nearly reached the age of seventy-four.

In November of the same year the second brother, Edward, who since the age of forty-four had borne the surname of Knight, died at Godmersham a few weeks after his eighty-fourth birthday had been passed. At Chawton House is a portrait painted of him when he was not far from twenty-five, which shows him to have been an unusually fine-looking young man, bearing, according to family tradition, not a little resemblance to his sister Jane. That he retained his good looks till very late in life, a small miniature of him bears abundant testimony.

But one of all the Steventon household was now left alive, Admiral Sir Francis Austen, who was destined to a longer life than any other member of it, his death not occurring till 1865, at his home in Portsmouth, twenty years after the death of his sister Cassandra at the same place. His first wife, who is very often referred to in Jane's letters from Southampton, died in 1823; and some time afterward he married Martha Lloyd, the sister of Mrs. James Austen. She had been an inmate of Mrs. George Austen's family at Southampton, and again at Chawton; and Jane was much attached to her.

With the death of Sir Francis Austen the gener-

ation of which his sister Jane was the most gifted representative became extinct. Of the Austens of later days little need here be said beyond the fact that they have always been deeply sensible of the talents and abilities of their famous aunt, and have borne honored names in their various stations in life. Some of them, like Lord Brabourne and the late Reverend Edward Cracroft Lefroy, are not unknown to the literature of the present day; and none of them have done anything to bring the slightest stain upon —

“The grand old name of gentleman.”

XII.

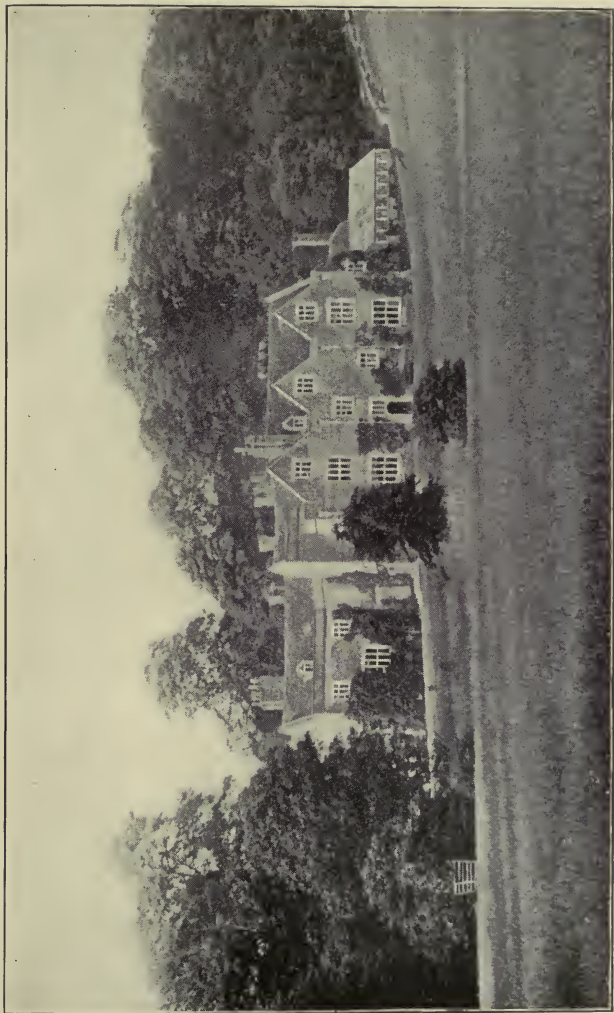
CHARACTER OF JANE AUSTEN SHOWN IN HER WRITINGS.

THE nephew to whom the world owes its first extended and authoritative account of his illustrious aunt gives in one of his chapters a most pleasing personal description of her. His statements, which are attested by family tradition and bits of contemporary evidence, may be taken as accurate, for at the time of her death in 1817 he had reached the age of eighteen years, and was therefore quite old enough to form impressions which should be sufficiently permanent to withstand the effacing effects of the half-century which was to elapse before his memoir would be written. From him, then, we learn that Jane Austen was in person "very attractive; her figure was rather tall and slender, her step light and firm, and her whole appearance expressive of health and animation. In complexion she was a clear brunette with a rich color; she had full, round cheeks, with mouth and nose small and well-formed, bright hazel eyes, and brown hair forming natural curls close round her face." In short, she was in appearance just such a specimen of the high-bred Hampshire gentlewoman as one may see any day in Winchester

High Street or at afternoon tea in any Winchester drawing-room of the present.

Of the two daughters at the Steventon rectory Cassandra Austen was probably the better-looking, for her features had the regularity which those of her sister lacked; but Jane's face expressed the more animation. The elder sister drew very well; and it is to her that we owe the best-known likeness of Jane Austen,—a pencil drawing made by Cassandra not far from the time when the family left Steventon. This represents her as wearing a cap,—a custom which the sisters adopted early in life and long before their friends thought such an addition to their costume rendered imperative by their years. Jane was fond of music, as we already have learned, but preferred probably the less complex kind; and at Chawton she practised the piano with a good deal of regularity. At Chawton House, besides the dance music already mentioned as belonging to her, I saw other music-books of hers with her autograph on the faded fly-leaves. One was a volume of six sonatas by Jean Chretien Bach; another consisted of manuscript music copied by both the sisters; and a third was a book of Scotch songs. She did not confine herself to instrumental music, for we have the authority of her nephew for saying that she sang these songs to her own accompaniment, and that her voice was very sweet.

Who would not like to have sat some eighty years ago in the great drawing-room, with its high, dark wainscot reaching nearly to the ceiling, its



CHAWTON HOUSE.

large, hospitable, generous-looking fireplace, its broad range of mullioned Tudor windows looking upon a perfect lawn, and sitting there have seen Jane Austen at her brother's piano, and listened to her singing? Who would not have enjoyed an experience like this? Though eighty years have fled, the beautiful room remains much as when she used to visit it, her music is still upon the piano, and very pleasant it is to remember that here she sat and sang, and moreover that her voice was sweet.

Besides a knowledge of music she read French easily, and was not wholly ignorant of Italian; but the list of what in those days would have been called her "accomplishments" does not go much beyond this point. History she knew a good deal of, and when a girl, is said to have had very pronounced views upon the political events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, being a particularly valiant defender of Mary of Scotland and of Charles I. However this may have been, in her later life politics occupied a very small portion of her thoughts; and she certainly experienced no difficulty in keeping the head of the unfortunate Charles I. out of her writings.

As may be inferred from sundry passages in her letters, she was fond of reading, although she has comparatively little to say in them concerning her favorite authors. Addison and Steele she had read frequently, and Richardson she almost knew by heart. Johnson she admired, but to a much less extent; and certainly nothing can be more unlike

his vicious, inflated, ponderous style than her own. Crabbe we have heretofore ascertained to have been a favorite writer with her ; and Cowper, about whom she says less, stood high in her regards. In spite of one or two allusions which seem to bear a contrary meaning, she enjoyed Scott's poetry, with which she was quite familiar ; and his prose, also, so far as she had the opportunity of knowing it, for but three of the Waverley novels were published in her lifetime. Although she was quite removed from the atmosphere of contemporary literary discussion, she at once detected the authorship of "Waverley," speaking thus confidently concerning it in a letter to her niece, Mrs. Anna Lefroy : —

"Walter Scott has no business to write novels, especially good ones. It is not fair. He has fame and profit enough as a poet, and should not be taking the bread out of the mouths of other people.

"I do not like him, and do not mean to like 'Waverley' if I can help it, but fear I must.

"I am quite determined, however, not to be pleased with Mrs. West's 'Alicia De Lacy,' should I ever meet with it, which I hope I shall not. I think I can be stout against anything written by Mrs. West. I have made up my mind to like no novels really but Miss Edgeworth's, yours, and my own."

The fingers that held the pen so skilfully had no less sure a touch in other employments. At the once popular game of spillikens, to which there are many references in her correspondence, she was considered an adept ; and when playing cup and ball, she would sometimes catch the ball a

hundred times in succession. Not unfrequently, in the latter part of her life, when pain in the eyes made it difficult for her to read or write long continuously, she would amuse herself at this graceful pastime till they were temporarily rested. But more important, at least in the estimation of her contemporaries, was her skill in all branches of needlework, her achievements in satin stitch in particular being considered beyond all praise.

As has been before remarked, she was always in high favor with children, who were invariably attracted to her by her sweetness of manner. As one of her nieces has expressed it, "She seemed to love you, and you loved her in return." She mingled freely in the amusements of children, and was the one among their elders to whom they always looked for help in their indoor sports. Her ready invention enabled her to tell the most delightfully long and circumstantial stories at the shortest notice ; and we may easily believe that this accomplishment was one which her twoscore or more nephews and nieces did not suffer to rust for want of use, but persistently begged for its unimpeded exercise on every possible occasion. It seems to me by no means improbable that her grandnephew, Lord Brabourne, whose talent as a weaver of fairy tales is so generally recognized by children of to-day, may have discovered his own peculiar gifts in the same direction from a knowledge of his aunt's abilities in that quarter.

In regard to her skill in the telling of fairy tales,

we must of course depend upon the evidence of her nephews and nieces, — a testimony presumably somewhat colored by family reverence for, and pride in, her genius, yet accurate enough in the main. Upon the same authority, too, we must rest as to personal descriptions. When, however, we wish to know what Jane Austen really thought and felt, — what, in fact, she really was, — we must first turn, as we have all along been doing, to her correspondence with her kinsfolk, and afterward to the pages of her books. While she did not consciously draw her own portrait or disclose her individual opinions on any of these, still there are features of the likeness to be traced and hints of the opinions to be gleaned from the chapters of the novels, if we will take the trouble to look for them.

It has been pointed out by several writers that her description of the delight her heroine Catherine Morland at ten years old experienced in “rolling down the greensward at the back of the house” was probably an autobiographical reminiscence, and so too, very likely, was the relation of Catherine’s preference for cricket over “not merely dolls, but the more heroic enjoyments of infancy, — nursing a dormouse, feeding a canary-bird, or watering a rose-bush.” Catherine’s childhood, in fact, must have resembled her own in more than one of its aspects. Like hers, it contained nothing in any wise remarkable, but was a sensible, healthy period of existence, such as a girl brought up as Jane had been, and with her amiable tolerance of



THE OCTAGON, UPPER ASSEMBLY ROOMS, BATH.

disposition, would be likely to have. I do not mean to say that Catherine Morland is in any sense a counterpart of Jane Austen; I mean simply that there are occasional resemblances between the novelist and her creation, which have a flavor that to my mind is distinctly autobiographic. When she records of Catherine that "though she could not write sonnets, she brought herself to read them; and though there seemed no chance of throwing a whole party into raptures by a prelude on the pianoforte of her own composition, she could listen to other people's performance with very little fatigue," — there is a personal reminiscence of her girlhood underlying the irony aimed at certain youthful heroines of contemporary fiction. She was doubtless thinking of herself when she declares that Catherine "had reached the age of seventeen, without having seen one amiable youth who could call forth her sensibility, without having inspired one real passion, and without having excited even any admiration but what was very moderate and very transient."

She had not the tinge of romance which led her pleasing young heroine into such awkward situations; but she certainly possessed the healthy temperament which made admiration not unwelcome to Catherine, while at the same time by no means indispensable to her happiness. In that delightful chapter of "Northanger Abbey" which recounts the first appearance of Catherine at a ball in the Assembly Rooms at Bath, I am very sure we may see

Jane Austen, the pretty, animated, unsophisticated girl of fifteen, going through the same experience, with her aunt, Mrs. Perrot, perhaps, as chaperone.

But however many autobiographic touches she may have introduced into the description of Catherine Morland, the likeness to herself at this period appears more strongly in Elizabeth Bennet. The native good sense which was usually at Catherine's command in emergencies was a distinguishing characteristic of Jane Austen ; but the vivacity and animation which Elizabeth possessed in a much greater degree than her sister heroine were quite as essential a part of their author's being, as every letter of hers bears indubitable evidence. There seems small reason to doubt that certain features in the portrait of Jane Bennet were adapted from her sister Cassandra, though the original of the portrait could lay claim to much greater strength of character than Jane Bennet had. How far Jane Austen was indebted to living persons for the characters of her *dramatis personæ* must of course remain purely a matter for individual conjecture. Her family are of the opinion that she never introduced actual personalities into her books, and this is undoubtedly true respecting her figures as separate wholes ; but as I read her letters, I seem to see here and there details which I cannot help thinking form the outline of a number of the subordinate creations in her pages.

As to the principal figures, I am by no means so sure, with the exception of the important ones

already mentioned. William Price, in "Mansfield Park," while he may not be considered as a portrait of either of her sailor brothers, is, I am inclined to think, a compound of the traits she admired in each of them. She was proud of their achievements, of their simple, unaffected manliness, and of the strength of the fraternal tie which neither time nor distance was powerful enough to weaken; and so I am very confident it was the thought of Francis or Charles that inspired such a passage as this:—

"William was often called on by his uncle to be the talker. His recitals were amusing in themselves to Sir Thomas; but the chief object in seeking them was to understand the reciter, to know the young man by his histories; and he listened to his clear, simple, spirited details with full satisfaction, seeing in them the proof of good principles, professional knowledge, energy, courage, and cheerfulness,—everything that could deserve or promise well. Young as he was, William had already seen a great deal. He had been in the Mediterranean, in the West Indies, in the Mediterranean again; had been often taken on shore by the favour of his captain, and in the course of seven years had known every variety of danger which sea and war together could offer."

Intimately acquainted with representatives of the naval profession, in the persons of her brothers Francis and Charles, her knowledge of the clergy of the Establishment was even closer. Her father and two of her brothers were Anglican clergymen, so were her uncle, Dr. Cooper, and

one or more of her cousins ; while in the circle of her immediate acquaintance were rectors and curates enough to have ministered to the spiritual wants of a small diocese. But of the clergy as a class, she gives us no such attractive presentment as she does of the navy in William Price. For the most part it is only incidentally, and as it were unavoidably, that we learn that her clerical figures are clergymen at all ; and it certainly is not for diligence in their sacred calling that we are interested in Henry Tilney, Edmund Bertram, Mr. Elton, or Edward Ferrars. Much has been said of Jane Austen's pictures of the clergy ; and conclusions have been drawn therefrom which reflect by no means favorably upon the Anglican shepherds of her day, — for of Nonconformist ministers she knew nothing, dissent being only a name to her. But her father, the Reverend George Austen, was a man by no means neglectful of any portion of his work, and her brother James was a worthy successor to him in the quiet corner of Hampshire where the elder clergyman had labored for two-score years ; and there were others whom she knew in the same profession whose lives were an equal ornament to it. Why, then, have we no such *con amore* portrayal of a clergyman from her hand as we have of a sailor in the person of William Price ? Is it because Jane Austen had little esteem for clergymen as such ? I think not.

It is true that the standard of clerical efficiency was lower a century ago than at present. People

were abundantly satisfied if their vicar or rector performed his sacred and his social duties with an equal amount of careful decorum. The age did not call for that vigor of spiritual life which is now generally esteemed essential in those who are to lead the way in things external to this world; and the average clergyman, being but an average clergyman, performed, like the average man in other professions, no more than was expected of him. It was only here and there that a curate or a canon had wakened to perceptions of greater usefulness and deeper spiritual experience than had been active in the church since the days of George Herbert and Nicholas Ferrar. Jane Austen, it may be presumed, was not greatly in advance of the thoughts of her time in these matters. She was attracted to the Established Church by feeling and association; but of the possibilities which should open before that church after Evangelicism, Tractarianism, and Rationalism had successively exerted their awakening influences upon it, she naturally could not conceive, since the last two were non-existent, and the first she knew only through some of its narrower and bigoted phases. Evangelicism, as she saw it, repelled her. Its set phrases were distasteful, its rigidity and narrowness were repulsive, to so tolerant and broad a mind as hers; while she was not sufficiently acquainted with it to recognize the real worth of the religious experience for which it stood.

It does not follow from her attitude toward

this development of the church's life that she was in every way satisfied with the average clergyman of her day, and that she had no worthy ideals of what men in that profession should resemble. But she disliked cant so thoroughly, and was so convinced that religion should be a constructive feature in life, — should appear rather in its general tendency than in especial manifestations, — that I believe she shrank from delineating a clergyman who should be more distinctly clerical than the ordinary man in that calling with whom her readers were likely to be acquainted. She was not sure enough of her ability to draw a member of this reverend profession who should be entirely free from a tinge of the cant she so heartily disliked. If she had this fear, I imagine it was a groundless one; but granting its existence, I think the fact that she drew for us no loftier types of the profession to which her father and brothers belonged may be thus accounted for. What she herself thought of the duties of a parish priest — an opinion fortified by a knowledge of what her father and her brother James had accomplished — may be learned from the words she puts into the mouth of Sir Thomas Bertram in "Mansfield Park": —

"A parish has wants and claims which can be known only by a clergyman constantly resident, and which no proxy can be capable of satisfying to the same extent. Edmund might, in the common phrase, do the duty of Thornton — that is, he might read prayers and preach — without giving up Mansfield Park; he might ride over,

every Sunday, to a house nominally inhabited, and go through divine service; he might be the clergyman of Thornton Lacey every seventh day for three or four hours, if that would content him. But it will not. He knows that human nature needs more lessons than a weekly sermon can convey; and that if he does not live among his parishioners, and prove himself by constant attention their well-wisher and friend, he does very little either for their good or his own."

Here, then, is one of her ideals for a clergyman: a life which should be spent in devotion to the best interests of his people; an existence in which their welfare was entitled to a consideration prior to his own, — an ideal in which there does not seem to be so very much lacking even now. She knew perfectly what the popular conception of a clergyman then was: —

"Indolence and love of ease, — a want of all laudable ambition, of taste for good company, or of inclination to take the trouble of being agreeable, which make men clergymen. A clergyman has nothing to do but to be slovenly and selfish, — read the newspaper, watch the weather, and quarrel with his wife. His curate does all the work, and the business of his own life is to dine."

And in the spirited bit of dialogue in "Mansfield Park," from which this extract is taken, she combats very successfully such a low view of the clerical character. A careful examination of her work will lead us, unless I am much mistaken, to acquit her of injustice toward a profession which in reality she esteemed most highly, though it may not dispel

the regret that she did not attempt to create a loftier example of clerical excellence than she has done.

To a greater extent than was perhaps common in her day, Jane Austen was a lover of natural scenery. It is freely shown in her letters; it does not so readily appear in her novels, at least not to a hurried reader of them, and for a very specific as well as artistic reason. Never did an author obtrude so little of his or her personality in print as Miss Austen. She never stood at one side and gossiped with her audience about the people on her stage, revealing her own virtues while she moralized over their foibles. She never tied a knot in the thread of her story while she directed attention to this enchanting bit of scenery or that depressing period of tiresome weather, or detailed at length her views upon subjects only remotely connected with the matter in hand. Her sense of proportion forbade all this; and consequently we do not find her indulging, for instance, in descriptions of the scenery she enjoyed, except as integral portions of her narrative.

Scattered throughout "Sense and Sensibility" may be noticed several allusions to the scenery of Somersetshire, and of the coombes and downs of Devon in the neighborhood of Exeter; but they are not introduced without a definite purpose, for in every case the narrative is dependent upon some collocation of scenery and incident, yet the former is never independent of the latter. In such a pas-

sage as this in "Mansfield Park," the few lines of description, instead of retarding the narrative, are in reality helpful, and rarely does she permit herself a longer clause of this kind: —

"The day was uncommonly lovely. It was really March; but it was April in its mild air, brisk soft wind, and bright sun occasionally clouded for a minute; and everything looked so beautiful under the influence of such a sky, the effects of the shadows pursuing each other, on the ships at Spithead and the island beyond, with the ever-varying hues of the sea now at high water, dancing in its glee and dashing against the ramparts with so fine a sound, produced altogether such a combination of charms for Fanny, as made her gradually almost careless of the circumstances under which she felt them."

Again, in "Emma" occurs this description of a rainy day, admirable for its conciseness and its perfect adaptation to her immediate purposes:

"The evening of this day was very long and melancholy, at Hartfield. The weather added what it could of gloom. A cold stormy rain set in, and nothing of July appeared but in the trees and shrubs, which the wind was despoiling, and the length of the day, which only made such cruel sights the longer visible."

If in "Northanger Abbey" she devotes a line or two to Beechen Cliff or some other natural feature of Bath, it is because that especial locality has its purpose to serve in her sequence of events. The only exception she makes to this rule of hers, and it is a partial exception only, is in one of the

chapters of "Persuasion," wherein the subjoined description of the neighborhood of Lyme-Regis occurs:—

"As there is nothing to admire in the buildings themselves, the remarkable situation of the town, the principal street almost hurrying into the water, the walk to the Cobb, skirting round the pleasant little bay, which in the season is animated with bathing-machines and company, the Cobb itself, its old wonders and new improvements, with the very beautiful line of cliffs stretching out to the east of the town, are what the stranger's eye will seek; and a very strange stranger it must be who does not see charms in the immediate environs of Lyme to make him wish to know it better. The scenes in its neighborhood,—Charmouth, with its high grounds and extensive sweeps of country, and still more its sweet, retired bay, backed by dark cliffs, where fragments of low rocks among the sands make it the happiest spot for watching the flow of the tide, for sitting in unwearied contemplation; the woody varieties of the cheerful village of Up-Lyme; and above all, Pinney, with its green chasms between romantic rocks, where the scattered forest trees and orchards of luxuriant growth declare that many a generation must have passed away since the first partial falling of the cliff prepared the ground for such a state, where a scene so wonderful and so lovely is exhibited as may more than equal any of the resembling scenes of the far-famed Isle of Wight,—these places must be visited, and visited again, to make the worth of Lyme understood."

It is an exception one is glad to have made, for the glimpse it affords of the author's own habits and preferences. We like to know that she took

a tranquil delight in "sitting in unwearied contemplation, watching the flow of the tide," and following with her eastward gaze the long line of yellow cliffs till they merge into the horizon to appear a few leagues farther on as a low dark cloud, marking where the Isle of Portland thrusts itself sharply into the sea.

Charmouth to-day, in its lovely situation, still repays the notice of the traveller; and the green chasms of Pinney, now made more noticeable by succeeding landslips, are quite as wonderful as Jane Austen found them. It would seem as if when she did attempt a bit of natural description she was resolved to be unerringly exact in her use of terms. "The principal street almost hurrying into the water" can hardly fail to impress similarly every visitor to Lyme. It is as if the street has gained so great an impetus in its long descent from the lofty down on the Exeter road that it can barely stop itself at the water's edge, and is able to do so only by making a violent turn to the left and rushing up the opposite ascent toward the grey old church of St. Michael.

Not less careful is her choice of adjectives than of participles. Leaving Lyme by the Axminster road, a walk over the long hill (and very much preoccupied must one be who does not turn repeatedly in the course of such a walk to gaze at the fair prospect behind him, of silver sea and curving lines of cliff) brings the traveller into a pleasant, irregular coombe, or valley, on the farther

side of the down. Here is a pretty village, moderately shaded and not hemmed in too closely by the encircling downs, with all its houses, from thatch-roofed cottage to more pretentious dwelling, showing the presence of thrift and comfort. Many of them are yellow-washed, and look bright even on a cloudy day. An attractive-looking church with battlemented tower stands on a wooded knoll above the high-road, but not far removed from it. There is nothing anywhere to repel the eye; nothing of dirt or gloom to be detected anywhere. I saw it thus eighty-five years after Jane Austen, looking upon it, pronounced it "cheerful;" and I could think of no better characterization for the little village of Up-Lyme half hidden among the green downs of Devon.

The same gentle pleasure which Jane experienced in quiet contemplation of the sea she took in watching the slow passing of summer into winter through the mild gradations of an English autumn. The latter was a season peculiarly dear to her in her later years, and she more than once briefly touches upon her feeling for it. Like her own Anne Elliot, her pleasure in that season arose "from the view of the last smiles of the year upon the tawny leaves and withered hedges, and from repeating to herself some few of the thousand poetical descriptions extant of autumn, — that season of peculiar and inexhaustible influence on the mind of taste and tenderness; that season which has drawn from every poet, worthy of being read,

some attempt at description or some lines of feeling."

What fraternal affection meant to her we have seen over and over again in the pages which have preceded this. It was with her a link which nothing could sever, a bond which was dearer to her than anything else in life. What an exquisite ideal of such affection she places before us in the love of Fanny Price for her brother William! There is no room for doubting that in describing it she was recalling some happy moments with her brother Charles or Francis returning from one or other of their voyages.

"Fanny had never known so much felicity in her life as in this unchecked, equal, fearless intercourse with the brother and friend, who was opening all his heart to her, telling her all his hopes and fears, plans and solitudes, respecting that long thought of, dearly earned, and justly valued blessing of promotion; . . . with whom (perhaps the dearest indulgence of the whole) all the good and evil of their childish years could be gone over again, and every former united pain and pleasure retraced with the fondest recollection. An advantage this, a strengthener of love, in which even the conjugal tie is beneath the fraternal. Children of the same family, the same blood, with the same first associations and habits, have some means of enjoyment in their power which no subsequent connexions can supply; and it must be by a long and unnatural estrangement, by a divorce which no subsequent connexion can justify, if such precious remains of the earliest attachments are ever entirely outlived."

Few stronger or more impressive words than these have been written upon this theme ; but the passage which contains them is not foisted upon the narrative, but appears as an integral part of it, as every reader of "Mansfield Park" must remember.

In "Northanger Abbey" we recognize the presence of a spirit of good-humored irony not held in check to so great a degree as is desirable, but which appears nowhere else in her writings in such inartistic proportions. The same spirit shines out in her letters, which are full of epigrammatic touches of the kind ; but in her novels, with this exception, it appears incidentally and at long intervals, where it serves to light up a page or sharpen the point of a description. In "Northanger Abbey" she intended to satirize a certain prevalent school of fiction which amused her by some of its absurdities ; but her own corrected perceptions of the relative importance of the factors of a story kept her from repeating this mistake, for delightful as is the recital of Catherine Morland's adventures, the motive of the tale is certainly an inartistic one. Henceforward this element in her work displayed itself only in such characterizations as that of Robert Ferrars in "Sense and Sensibility," whose face expressed "strong, natural, sterling insignificance," and of his mother also, with whom "a lucky contraction of the brow had rescued her countenance from the disgrace of insipidity, by giving it the strong char-

acters of pride and ill-nature," and whose words, not being many, were "proportioned to the number of her ideas." Indeed, in "Northanger Abbey" itself it is sometimes softened into humorous incidental reflections like this: —

"Dress is at all times a frivolous distinction, and excessive solicitude about it often destroys its own aim. Catherine knew all this very well; her great-aunt had read her a lecture on the subject only the Christmas before; and yet she lay awake ten minutes on Wednesday night debating between her spotted and her tamboured muslin; and nothing but the shortness of the time prevented her buying a new one for the evening. This would have been an error in judgment, great though not uncommon, from which one of the other sex rather than her own, a brother rather than a great-aunt, might have warned her; for man only can be aware of the insensibility of man towards a new gown. It would be mortifying to the feelings of many ladies could they be made to understand how little the heart of man is affected by what is costly or new in their attire; how little it is biassed by the texture of their muslin, and how unsusceptible of peculiar tenderness towards the spotted, the sprigged, the mull, or the jackonet. Woman is fine for her own satisfaction alone. No man will admire her the more, no woman will like her the better for it. Neatness and fashion are enough for the former; and a something of shabbiness or impropriety will be most endearing to the latter. But not one of these grave reflections troubled the tranquillity of Catherine."

There is not the slightest touch of cynicism in a passage of this kind any more than in the one

that follows, which shows the quiet amusement it gave her to observe the attitude of the men of her day toward anything like the existence of reasoning powers in any representative of her own sex.

“Where people wish to attach, they should always be ignorant. To come with a well-informed mind is to come with an inability of administering to the vanity of others, which a sensible person would always wish to avoid. A woman especially, if she have the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can.

“The advantages of natural folly in a beautiful girl have been already set forth by the capital pen of a sister author ; and to her treatment of the subject I will only add, in justice to men, that though to the larger and more trifling part of the sex, imbecility in females is a great enhancement of their personal charms, there is a portion of them too reasonable and too well informed themselves to desire anything more in woman than ignorance.”

It was never her intention to be didactic, and when she does occasionally become so, it is because the spirit of the age in which she lived was too strong for her ; and she wrote in unconscious obedience to its demands. Not writing with this design before her, however, there arose no occasion for her to apply the heavier strokes of satire to the sins and foibles of her fellow-beings ; and consequently the satire remains simply good-humor with an edge to it, as, for example, when she says in “Emma” that —

“ Human nature is so well disposed towards those who are in interesting situations that a young person who either marries or dies is sure of being kindly spoken of; ”

or again in the same book that —

“ It may be possible to do without dancing entirely. Instances have been known of young people passing many, many months successively without being at any ball of any description, and no material injury accrue either to body or mind ; but when a beginning is made, — when the felicities of rapid motion have once been, though slightly, felt, — it must be a very heavy set that does not ask for more.”

Readers of “ Persuasion ” will remember that when Lady Russell was so much annoyed by the animation and cheerful stir in the Musgroves’ family rooms at holiday time, she declared to Anne Elliot her intention to remember to choose in future some other season of the year for calling at Upper-cross. This circumstance, it will also be recalled, gives occasion for a quiet passing observation of this nature : —

“ Every body has their taste in noises as well as in other matters ; and sounds are quite innocuous or most distressing by their sort rather than their quantity. When Lady Russell not long afterwards was entering Bath on a wet afternoon, and driving through the long course of streets from the Old Bridge to Camden Place, amidst the dash of other carriages, the heavy rumble of carts and drays, the bawling of news-men, muffin-men, and milkmen, and the ceaseless clink of pattens, she made no complaint. No, these

were noises which belonged to the winter pleasures ; her spirits rose under their influence ; and, like Mrs. Musgrove, she was feeling, though not saying, that after being long in the country, nothing could be so good for her as a little quiet cheerfulness."

It is in "Persuasion," too, that we find a witty reflection like the following, which is of a kind she seldom permitted herself to indulge in, but which no one of her time could put so tersely as she :

"Personal size and mental sorrow have certainly no necessary proportions. A large, bulky figure has as good a right to be in deep affliction as the most graceful set of limbs in the world. But, fair or not fair, there are unbecoming conjunctions, which reason will patronize in vain, which taste cannot tolerate, which ridicule will seize."

As must already have been seen, she took a healthy delight in novel-reading ; and she read with all her critical perceptions alive to merits as well as faults. She early recognized the immense importance that the novel was already coming to hold in modern life, and had small patience with that form of literary affectation which labored to belittle it. It is against this practice that she exclaims with healthy indignation in one of the earlier chapters of "Northanger Abbey" : —

"I will not adopt that ungenerous and impolitic custom, so common with novel-writers, of degrading, by their contemptuous censure, the very performances to the number of which they are themselves adding : joining with their greatest enemies in bestowing the

harshest epithets on such works, and scarcely ever permitting them to be read by their own heroine, who, if she accidentally take up a novel, is sure to turn over its insipid pages with disgust. Alas! if the heroine of one novel be not patronized by the heroine of another, from whom can she expect protection and regard? I cannot approve of it. Let us leave it to the reviewers to abuse such effusions of fancy at their leisure, and over every new novel to talk in threadbare strains of the trash with which the press now groans. Let us not desert one another; we are an injured body. Although our productions have afforded more extensive and unaffected pleasure than those of any other literary corporation in the world, no species of composition has been so much decried. From pride, ignorance, or fashion, our foes are almost as many as our readers; and while the abilities of the nine-hundredth abridger of the 'History of England,' or of the man who collects and publishes in a volume some dozen lines of Milton, Pope, and Prior, with a paper from the 'Spectator,' and a chapter from Sterne, are eulogized by a thousand pens, there seems almost a general wish of decrying the capacity and undervaluing the labour of the novelist, and of slighting the performances which have only genius, wit, and taste to recommend them. 'I am no novel-reader. I seldom look into novels. Do not imagine that I often read novels. It is really very well for a novel.' Such is the common cant. 'And what are you reading, Miss——?' 'Oh, it is only a novel!' replies the young lady; while she lays down her book with affected indifference or momentary shame. It is only 'Cecilia,' or 'Camilla,' or 'Belinda;' or, in short, only some work in which the greatest powers of the mind are displayed, in which the most thorough knowledge of human nature, the happiest delineation

of its varieties, the liveliest effusions of wit and humor, are conveyed to the world in the best-chosen language."

It is the only actual digression to be found in her books if, considering the manner in which it occurs, it may fairly be so styled; but it is surely a most pardonable one, which her readers should be willing to forgive equally on account of its spirited defence of her profession and the strength of the position it occupies.

Consideration for the feelings of others was a noticeable trait in her character; and her novels afford many incidental as well as unconscious revelations of it. But of all these I like best that which appears in "Emma," where Mr. Knightley administers a deserved rebuke to the heroine, whose thoughtlessness has allowed her to ridicule publicly the harmless absurdities of Miss Bates. Unquestionably Jane Austen derived amusement from a contemplation of the vanities and small frailties of the men and women of her Hampshire and Kentish world; but equally without question do I believe that she never found delight in making light of them in public, however she may have enjoyed discussing them in lively, unrestrained intercourse with Cassandra.

"Persuasion" represents the ripest development of Jane Austen's powers, the latest phase of her thoughts and feelings. It is a novel which, while not wanting in the several excellences of those which preceded it, has a mellow tone and a

more finished grace of style than any of the others. It was written at a time when bodily strength had given place to weakness ; and although her mind was more active than ever, her physical condition insensibly influenced her thought, giving this latest of her books that deeper note of feeling, that finer touch of sympathy and tenderness, which make "Persuasion" the greatest of all her works.

She has not infused into the character of Anne Elliot, its heroine, all of her own strength of purpose or vivacity of manner ; but when Anne Elliot is giving utterance to her deepest convictions it is Jane Austen herself who is speaking, — the woman who is passing into the serenity of middle life, into the maturity and insight of chastened feeling.

She may not have seen so far into the deeps of motive as some of her successors ; she may not have been able to trace the influence of circumstance upon character with as unerring skill ; her horizon may seem a narrow one to our less obstructed gaze, and the ultimate purposes and ideals of her *dramatis personæ* curiously circumscribed when contrasted with a later view of human responsibilities. But within her range — a range too that is much wider than her superficial readers suspect — she has no equal, and her inferiors approach her only in the same degree that the lesser lights of "the spacious times of great Elizabeth" approached the great sun of their day and of all days since.

What Jane Austen was as a novelist has too many times been told to need retelling here. What she was as a woman I have in these now completed chapters endeavored to show. There remains no need for further words of mine. Whatever measure of success may belong to the endeavor is no part of the biographer's duty to decide ; this, however, I can most sincerely say, that its performance has been to me a labor of devotion, reverence, and love. And now that the end of it all is reached, I know of no better colophon than the tender, earnest words in which Jane Austen, almost in her last days, expressed her conceptions of the love of man and woman : —

“God forbid that I should undervalue the warm and faithful feelings of any of my fellow-creatures. I should deserve utter contempt if I dared to suppose that true attachment and constancy were known only by woman. No, I believe you capable of everything great and good in your married lives. I believe you equal to every important exertion, and to every domestic forbearance, so long as — if I may be allowed the expression — so long as you have an object. I mean, while the woman you love lives, and lives for you. All the privilege I claim for my own sex (it is not a very enviable one ; you need not covet it) is that of loving longest when existence or when hope is gone.”



REVEREND JAMES EDWARD AUSTEN-LEIGH, 1798-1874.

NEPHEW AND FIRST BIOGRAPHER OF JANE AUSTEN.

APPENDIX.

*Extract from Manuscript Book of Family Records
kept by the late Miss Fanny Lefroy, great-niece of
Jane Austen.*

I THINK my mother¹ must have spent most of her time at Steventon during the widowhood of her father, for she could remember . . . hearing "Pride and Prejudice" (begun 1796) read aloud by the youthful writer to her sister. She was a very intelligent, quick-witted child; and she caught up the names of the characters, and talked about them so much downstairs, that her aunts feared she would provoke enquiry, for the story was still a secret from the elders. Let me in my mother's words describe the house and room in which Jane Austen wrote her two first works.

"The Rectory of Steventon had been of the most miserable description; but in the possession of my grandfather it became a tolerably roomy and convenient habitation, as he added, and improved, and walled in a good kitchen garden, and planted out the east wind, enlarging the house until it

¹ Miss Lefroy's mother was Mrs. Anna Austen Lefroy, the oldest child of Reverend James Austen. The latter had lost his first wife, Anna's mother; and at this time his little daughter was an inmate of Steventon rectory before her father had succeeded to the living.

came to be considered a very comfortable family residence. On the sunny side was a shrubbery and flower-garden, with a terrace walk of turf which communicated by a small gate with what was termed the wood walk, — a path winding through clumps of underwood, and overhung by tall elm trees skirting the upper side of the home meadows. The lower bow-window, which looked so cheerfully into the sunny garden, and up the middle grass-walk bordered with strawberries, to the sun-dial at the end, was that of my grandfather's study, his own exclusive property, safe from the bustle of all household cares. The dining or common sitting room looked to the front, and was lighted by two casement windows. On the same side the front door opened into a smaller parlour; and visitors, who were few and rare, were not a bit the less welcome to my grandmother because they found her sitting there busily engaged with her needle, making and mending. In later times, but not probably until my two aunts had completed their short course of schooling at M^{dne} Laturelle's at Reading Abbey, and were living at home, a sitting-room was made upstairs, — 'the dressing-room,' as they were pleased to call it, perhaps because it opened into a smaller chamber in which my two aunts slept. I remember the common-looking carpet, with its chocolate ground, and the painted press with shelves above for books, and Jane's piano, and an oval looking-glass that hung between the windows; but the charm of the room, with its scanty furniture and cheaply papered walls, must have been, for those old enough to understand it, the flow of native home-bred wit with all the fun and nonsense of a large and clever family. Here, as I have said before, were written the two first of my aunt Jane's completed works, 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'Sense and Sensibility.'"¹

¹ The manuscript book from which the above is taken is now in the possession of C. Austen-Leigh, Cambridge, a cousin of the late Miss Lefroy, who has kindly furnished the extract for use in this volume.

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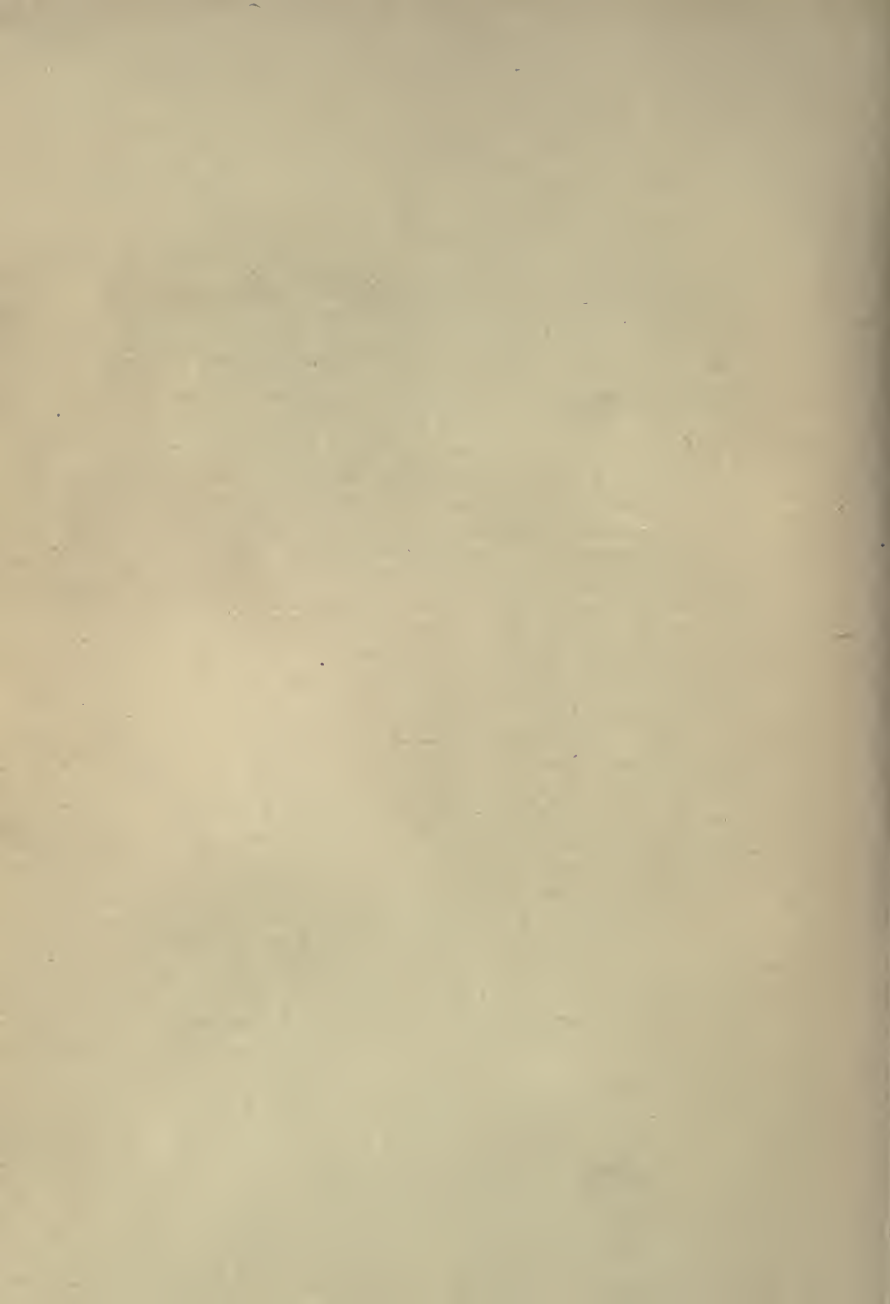
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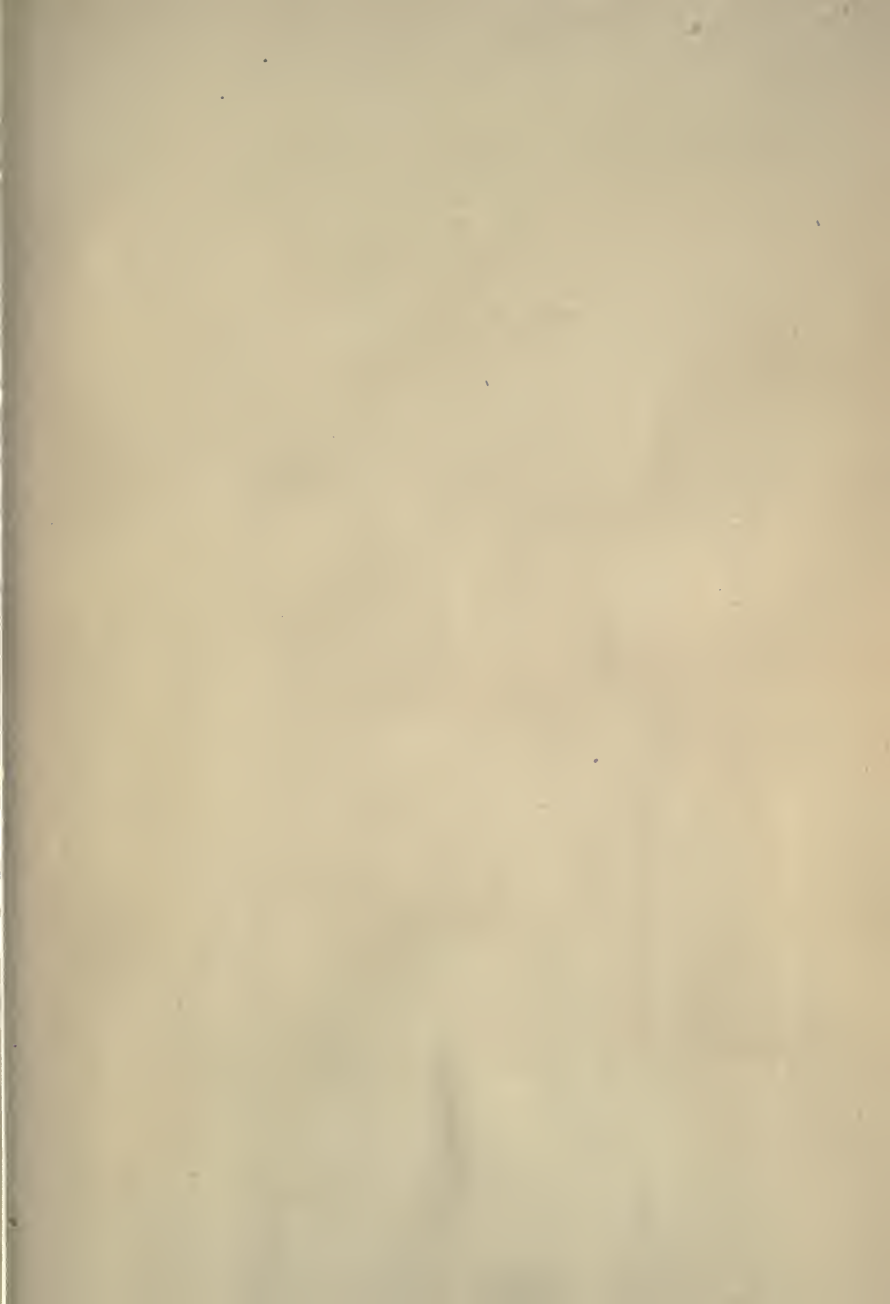
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